# Mythology in the Works of Kālidāsa

Asoke Chatterjee Sastri

Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad Lucknow

# Mythology in the Works of Kālidāsa

**Asoke Chatterjee Sastri**

Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad
Lucknow

*Publishers :*

Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad
Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Hazratganj, Lucknow—226 001
INDIA
Phone : 243962



First Edition : 1991

Price : Rs. 20.00

*Printers:*

Pnar Mudrak
117, Nazirabad, Lucknow
INDIA
Phone : 243757

*Dedicated to*

*My Elder Brother Sri M. K. Chatterjee, B. Sc., B. E.*
*Formerly Chief Enginner (P. W. D.) and*
*Housing Commisioner*
*A Source of Academic Inspiration to me.*

*Author*

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, Lucknow has been organising lectures every year in memory of its Founder-President, the late Prof. K. A. S. Iyer. These lectures are subsequently published in the *ṚTAM*, a multilingual half-yearly research journal of the Parishad. Very eminent scholars from different parts of the country and abroad have delivered these lectures.

It was in this series that Prof. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri had delivered three lectures on Mythology in the Works of Kālidāsa. Prof. Chatterjee Sastri needs no introduction. He is an erudite scholar gifted with great profundity, originality of thoughts and clarity of expressions. He is an authority in pauranic studies and has several publications to his credit. His deep insight into the Purāṇas is quite evident in these lectures. For precision these three lectures delivered by Professor Chatterjee have been divided into six chapters where mythological references found in the works of Kālidāsa have been classified under different heads, viz. references to gods, those to semigods, those to sages, those to kings, those to sub-human demons and those to miscellaneous objects.

The Parishad is indebted to Prof. Chatterjee for delivering these lectures under its auspices and for permitting us to bring them out in this form. I am sure that the lovers of Sanskrit literature in general and those of Kālidāsa in particular will be greatly benefitted by these lectures.

**J. P. Sinha**

28th Feb., 1991

# INTRODUCTION

Mythology is a fascinating subject. It is a mixture of religious beliefs, popular imagination, historical and gradual social development. It reflects fully the systematic growth of a thought or belief from its embryonic stage to its final shape.

In the beginning, all religion had a base of fear, wonder and curiosity for the unknown. Nature and super-natural powers with their great potential appeared wonderful and awesome to the simple minded primitive people. Their dependence upon natural phenomena also struck a cord of deep respect within their heart. So their imaginative faculty, sensitive enough to recognise the importance, conjured up pictures about them endowing them with super-human position and attributes. Their own appearance provided models. This was the beginning of a myth. As soon as it started rolling, different cultures, sectarian dogma, advanced observations, poetic imagination, all contributed to its growth. The process of modification of a particular myth actually never ceases, it just switches over from one form to another, depending on the change of outlook and interpretation. Mythology, however differently treated, has its firm footing on religion, tradition and popular belief. Because of this, its importance is never questioned.

Several interesting features are found if the growth of a particular myth is followed. At the start the nucleus is simple enough to reflect the sense of awe or respect, then with passage of time, individual fancy takes over and personifies the natural phenomenon endowing it with attributes of a superior character. Subsequently as the original and natural basis is forgotten, the myth is wildly developed changing and rechanging under varying factors like time, social and cultural growth. Finally it takes such a different shape that it is extremely difficult to trace the course of evolution and understand the implication of all features from the haze of its exaggerated form.

Indian mythology fully reveals these odd peculiarities. Even in the remote Vedic literature, myths were fairly grown. Personification of a

natural phenomenon provides ample scope for development of a myth. A particular natural force was conceived in different forms by different seers. As a result many features are common to many gods, which again inadvertantly mixed to create new dimensions of an old image or introduce new personalities. Some gods of pre-Vedic age are also Indianised to match the growing clan.

In the age of Kālidāsa, myths were already a part of Indian religious and social life. Almost all the ancient divine families were fully formed, flourishing and growing. The expansive Purāṇic literature supplied most interesting data about the social, political and historical studies of ancient India. In the Purāṇas, mythology simply thrived. Kālidāsa's keen insight rightly assessed the potentiality of the mythology as a subject and the extent of its popularity and influence. For this, he did not hesitate to choose the subject of one of his epics from mythological accounts, namely the *Kumārasambhava*. This composition is essentially mythical and it proves the advanced stage of the myth of the birth of Kārttikeya. Apart from this, he consciously dives into the ocean of Indian mythology to salvage appropriate similies, in order to make his descriptions proper and statements impressive. Numerous references are scattered about in his compositions to add special quality to his style. They also bear testimony to the fact that he was an expert in Purāṇic studies. The surprising extent of his knowledge in this line is revealed from the great number of references.

These references are classified here under different heads. In the first chapter, references to different gods are dealt with; in the second, the references to demigods; in the third, those to sages; in the fourth those to kings; in the fifth, those to sub-human demons and in the last, those to miscellaneous objects have been analysed.

Among the Hindu gods, developed upto the age of Kālidāsa, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva make up the famous Trinity. Brahmā is assigned the responsibility of creation, Viṣṇu of maintenance and Śiva of destruction. This idea is so firm-rooted in Indian mind that we prefer to abide by the order here. It will be clear through the discussion of the comparative status of the gods—some gaining popularity while others losing it.

Three years ago I was invited to deliver a course of three lectures by the Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, Lucknow and these lectures form the nucleus of the present treatise. I will cherish for ever in my heart the

sympathetic encouragement I received from the Late Prof. Satyavṛat Singh who played a very important role in the preparation of my lecture notes. I must express my heart-felt thanks to Prof. Dr. J. P. Sinha, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Lucknow University who, in spite of his serious illness, gave a final shape to my book and himself took up the hazardous task of going through the entire proof.

I am highly indebted to my wife Smt. Jharna Chatterjee who has always cheered me up in all my academic works. All my glory and success are due to her life-long encouragement and moral assistance.

My dearest grand daughter Toya Chatterjee (ne Babusaheb) is my only source of strenuous activity and benevolent solace. I offer her my sincere love and affection.

I would very much like to draw the attention of the "Kālidāsa rasika" scholars who are the soul judge of the value of the present work.

**Asoke Chatterjee Sastri**

Department of Sanskrit
Calcutta University
Calcutta

## CHAPTER—I

# MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCE ABOUT GODS

### BRAHMĀ

Brahmā, the first god to be discussed, though found a place in the Hindu Trinity, is neither of ancient origin nor a god of much importance. He is given priority for the sake of convention only.

Brahmā as the creator is not found in the Vedic literature. Instead we get Hiraṇyagarbha, Prajāpati, Brahmaṇaspati and the like. The word Brahmā occurs in the Vedas to signify a completely different meaning. It means the supervisor of a sacrifice.

In the subsequent ages, the different aspects of Hiraṇyagarbha, Prajāpati and some other Vedic gods were blended to create a new conception of a god, who was put in charge of creation. This feature of creativity gives rise to such epithets as Vedhas, Dhātā etc. He was imagined quite old as the seniority demanded and was endowed with human qualities and flaws.

This image of Brahmā is entirely a product of mythology. This is totally different from Brahman or the conception of Ultimate Reality, developed and cultured to infinite details by the Upaniṣad-s and the six doctrines of Indian Philosophy. Brahmā was never a favourite of the mythologists, perhaps the old image offered limited scope for wild imagination. Inspite of that, several legends grew around him, even exposing his vulnerability.

The creative aspect of Brahmā is mostly publicised. He is described to create this world down to the last minute detail. In Kālidāsa's writing, this naturally is given prominence. In one place he says :

*sargaśeṣapraṇayanād viśvayoner anantaram|*
*purātanāḥ purāvidbhir dhātāra iti kīrtītaḥ||*[1]

Here Kālidāsa clarifies his position as a creator and justifies the name dhātā. He confirms Brahmā's seniority in the following :

*praṇematustau pitarau prajānāṃ padmāsanasthāya pitāmahāya||*[2]

Our poet mentions in details the method of creation here :

*stripuṃsāvātmabhāgau te bhinnamūrteḥ sisṛkṣayā|*
*prasūtibhājaḥ sargasya tāveva pitarau smṛtau||*[3]

At the start of the second canto of the *Kumārasambhwa* Kālidāsa puts an eulogy of Brahmā. It is remarkable to note that here he got two images of Brahmā and Brahman mixed. It indicates that in Kālidāsa's time, the Absolute aspect of Brahman was so developed that he could not ignore it. The mythological and the philosophical aspects ran juxtaposed at one time which can be considered a transitional phase of Brahmā myth.

The birth or origin of Brahmā is described by later Purāṇas in a peculiar manner. At the very beginning of creation, Viṣṇu was lying in the water on his bed of śeṣanāga when a lotus sprang up from his navel and Brahmā appeared on it, singing Viṣṇu's praise. This imagination gives rise to such names of Brahmā as kamalāsana, aja, svayaṃbhū, padmayoni etc. Kālidāsa describes this form beautifully in the following :

*nābhiprarūḍhāmburuhāsanena saṃstūyamānaḥ prathamena dhātrā|*[4]

Brahmā is described in a similar manner in the *MBh*[5] and the Purāṇas.[6] The name 'aja' is given prominence in the following statement :

---

1. *Kumāra.*, 6.9
2. *Ibid.* 7.86.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.7.
4. *Raghu.*, 13.6.
5. *MBh, vana*, 203, 10.
6. *SP*, 24.18.
   *Mat.*, 168.15-16.
   *Vi.* 4. 1-4.
   *Var.*, 2.3.

*ataḥ pita brahmaṇā eva nāmnā tamātmajanmānamajaṃ cakāra//*[7]

The name Hiraṇyagarbha of Vedic texts lost its original implication in later ages. Hence different explanations are offered for this name in different texts. The process of creation is described in the first chapter of *Manusamhitā*. There it is stated that Brahmā was born inside a golden egg which floated on water.

Brahmā is invariably described as having four faces and chanting Vedic hymns by them. The reason of his having four faces is described in two legends.

The *MBh.*[8] describes that Viśvakarman created Tilottamā to create antagonism between the invincible brothers Sunda and Upasunda. The maiden was so beautiful that Brahmā could not take his eyes off her. As she went round him to pay homage, four faces sprang up on four sides of his head. *Matsya* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*-s, however, describe that the beautiful maiden in question was not Tilottamā but Śatarūpī, Brahmā's wife. Kālidāsa got this legend readymade as he freely used the epithet *caturmukha* or *caturānana*.

*purāṇasya kavestasya caturmukhasamīritā/*
*pravṛttirāsicchabdānāṃ caritārthā catuṣṭayī//*[9]

Generally Brahmā is imagined as a confirmed bachelor. But two or three incidents leave mark on his otherwise impeccable character.

Kālidāsa at least in two places threw covert hints to the embarrassing legend. In the *Kumārasambhava* he says :

*abhilāṣamudīritendriyaḥ svasutāyāmakarot prajāpatiḥ/*
*otha tena nigṛhya vikriyām ıbhiśaptaḥ phalametadanvabhūt//*[10]

Again in the same text we find :

*nirmiteṣu pitṛṣu svayambhuvā yā tanuḥ sutanu pūrvamujjhitā/*
*seyamastamudayañca sevyate tena mānini mamātra gauravaṃ//*[11]

*Kalikāpurāṇa*[12] describes the legend in detail. Sandhyā was the mindborn duaghter of Brahmā. He created Madana immediately after her and

---

7. *Raghu.*, 5.36
8. *MBh., Ādi*, 21· 25-28.
9. *Kumāras.*, 2.17.
10. *Kumāras.*, 4.41.
11. *Ibid.*, 8.52.

endowed him with the power of charming the whole world. Madana, impatient and curious to test the extent of his power, then and there, tried it on none other than Brahmā. Consequently Brahmā, under Madana's spell, could not resist his feeling of desire about Sandhyā who was present nearby. Ashamed of his own lack of control, Brahmā cursed Madana that he would eventually be burnt to ashes by Śiva.

Sometimes the names of Brahmā's wife are given as Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī and Sarasvatī also. Kālidāsa gave hints by using the word *'astamudayañca'* in the *Kumārasambhava*[13] that he means Sandhyā as the heroine of the episode. He also gave subtle hints about the impropriety of the situation by the use of the word *'evasutāyām'*.

This legend has a bearing on that of the burning of Madana. It clearly shows how two legends, perhaps developed independently, are entwined in a single myth. This was done probably to attach importance to less important gods and episodes.

## VIṢṆU

Viṣṇu, by virtue of his belonging to the Trinity is to be placed after Brahmā. Viṣṇu, as we find him in the Purāṇas and Epics, is not found in the Vedas in similar mould. In that respect he is a later god. In the Vedic literature, however, the name Viṣṇu was mentioned in several places, not meaning Nārāyaṇa but a form of the sungod.[14] Yāska explains the etymology of the word as :

*atha yadviṣito bhavati tadviṣṇurbhavati, viṣṇurviśatervā vyaśnotervā*[15]

This explanation clearly shows the sun image of Viṣṇu in the Vedas.

It is in the Purāṇas that the transformation of this god took place. Gradually he was elevated to a supreme position. Naturally legends and myths galore collected around him during the process. These stories were already firmly established in the age of Kālidāsa. So he automatically uses significant names and sometimes directly mentions certain episodes.

---

12. *Kā.*, 1.53, 57-58.
13. *Kumāras.*, 8.52.
14. *ṚV.* 1.77.10.
    1.154.2.
    1.155.6.
15. *Nirukta*, 12.18.5.

The most famous feature of the Viṣṇu conception is his ten incarnations. This extremely ingenius feature describes how Viṣṇu saved the world from total destruction ten times. It is no wonder that Kālidāsa refers to these incarnations in details.

The Rāma incarnation of Viṣṇu is one of the most worshipped form of the god. It is given maximum exposure in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki. It can be considered the starting point of an independent cult. But Kālidāsa seems ignorant of the Rāma cult. He treats Rāma as one of the incarnations only. Viṣṇu appeared on earth in Tretāyuga to kill Rāvaṇa and save the world from its atrocities. Kālidāsa refers to this form in :

*rāmābhidhāno hariritYuvāca/*[16]

In his Varāha incarnation he is said to have saved the world from a deluge. Purāṇas give different versions of the story. *Brahamāṇḍapurāṇa* narrates :

*rasātalatale magnām rasātalatale gatām/*
*prabhurlokahitārthāya damṣṭrayābhyujjahāra gām//*[17]

The *Matsayapurāṇa*[17a] repeats this after giving an account of the feat. Kālidāsa beautifully describes this phenomenon :

*rasātalādādibhavena pumsā bhuvaḥ prayuktodvahanakriyāyāḥ/*
*asyācchamambhaḥ pralayapravṛddham muhūrtavaktrābharaṇam babhūva//*[18]

The Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu is one of the most popular legends of the Purāṇic literature. This legend has its origin in the Vedas where three steps of Viṣṇu are mentioned more than once.[19] One of them is :

*idam Viṣṇurvicakrame tredhā nidadhe padam/*
*samūḍhamasya pāmsure//*[20]

In *Ś Br.*[21] we find the nucleus of this legend. Here for the first time gods and demons are described as two parts involved in the transfer of land. In

16. *Raghu.* 1.31.
17. *Brm.* 6.25.
17a. 249. 74-76
18. *Raghu.* 13.8.
19. *ṚV.* 1.154.1.
7.100.3.
8.29.7.
*KYV.* 2.2.1.3.
20. *ṚV.* 1.22.17.
21. *ŚBr.* 1.2.2.1, 3-6.8.

successive ages more details are added and finally Bali is included. The *Vāmanapurāṇa*[22] gives the story thus: the dwarf was born to Aditi and Kaśyapa. In the sacrifice of Bali, he came and was honoured by the king of the demons. He asked for land, measuring three steps only, which Bali promised to give. The priest of the demons, Śukrācārya, warned the king of the danger of the commitment which the latter ignored. His first step covered the heavenly region, his second the earth, his third was placed on Bali's head and sent him to the nether regions. The *Bhāgvatapurāṇa*[23] gives a fuller account of the story. *Harivaṃśa* (*Bhaviṣyaparvan*), *Matsyapurāṇa* and *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* (*madhyakhaṇḍa*) also give similar accounts.

The three steps are mentioned by our poet in the following :

*tiryagūrdhvamadhastācca vyāpako mahimā hareḥ/*
*trivikramodyatasyāsīt sa tu svābhāvikastava//*[24]

The involvement of Bali in this episode is clearly brought out here :

*Balipradiṣṭām śrriyamādadānāṃ traivikramam pādamivendraśatruḥ//*[25]

And also here :

*śyāmaḥ pādo baliniyamanābhyudyatasyeva Viṣṇoh/*[26]

Scholars have tried to offer various interpretations of the legend, but it seems that the mythological version was so famous by the poet's age that he naturally accepts it as one of the stories of glorification of Viṣṇu.

Right from the Vedic age, a close connection between Indra and Viṣṇu was imagined.[27] They were praised together in a hymn of the *ṚV.*[28] This affinity led the later Purāṇists to weave myths to the effect that Viṣṇu is the younger brother of Indra. *Vāmanapurāṇa* uses the term 'upendra' :

*rātrijam śuryarūpī ca tam upendraṃ namāmyaham//*[29]

The root of this conception seems to be the legend that in his dwarf incarnation he favoured Aditi and Kaśyapa and was born to them. As Indra was

22. *VP.*, 30.31.
23. *Bh.*, *skandha*, 8.
24. *Kumāra.*, 6.71.
25. *Raghu.*, 7.35
26. *Megha.* (*Pūrva*), 57.
27. *Indrasya yujya sakhā*, *ṚV.*, 1.22.19.
28. *Ibid.*, 7.99.
29. *VP.*, 27.34.

already an established son of them. Viṣṇu came to be recognised as the younger one. Kālidāsa mentions this as under:

*viḍaujasā viṣṇurivagrajena bhrātrā yadittham paravān asi tvam//*[30]

The Gopāla aspect of Kṛṣṇa is a much later and somewhat sectarian development of the Viṣṇu image. It has, however, scanty and stray references in earlier literature. In the *Gopālatāpani Upaniṣad* of the *Atharvaveda*, Kṛṣṇa is described as a cowherd with a bevy of gopi-girls around him. Scholars[31] are of the opinion that the lifestyle of the Ābhira-s may have some influence on the childhood plays of Kṛṣṇa. Actually in the Vedic literature Viṣṇu has been praised many a time as 'gopa'[32]. The word '*gau*' meant 'sunrays' in earlier literature and cow in later commentaries. This word also means 'the earth'. So the meaning 'protector of the earth' was quite common. All these facts collectively contribute to the legend of Kṛṣṇa. Numerous stories like stealing of milk products, play on the banks of Yamunā, killing of the agents of Kaṃsa like Putanā and others, restraining of the serpent Kāliya are later conjectures originating from popular imagination. Details about his birth as the son of Vāsudeva and rearing up by Nanda gopa also are later additions. This later image of Kṛṣṇa has already taken a definite shape in the times of Kālidāsa as is revealed in the comment :

*barheṇeva sphuritarucinā gopaveṣasya Viṣṇoḥ//*[33]

The *Ādiparvan*[34] of the *MBh.* gives the story of the birth of Garuḍa and Aruṇa, the dispute between Garuḍa and the snakes over Uccaiḥśravā's tail, subsequent fraud which resulted in Vinatā's servitude. It then describes how Garuḍa brought nectar and caused Vinatā's release. *Skandapurāṇa*[35] gives the same story. Viṣṇu made this Garuḍa his vehicle as per its own choice.

The word garutmān is used by the Vedic seers. The *ŚYV.* says :

*suparṇo'si garutmān pṛṣṭhe pṛthivyāḥ sida/*[36] ... etc.

---

30. *Raghu.*, 14.59.
31. Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 157.
32. *ṚV.*, 1.22.18.
    3.55.10.
33. *Megha, Pūrva*, 15.
34. *MBh.*, *Ādi*, 16.83.
35. *SK.*, *āvantya*, 76.
36. *ŚYV.*, 17.72.

Here the word means 'one who has wings'. This meaning proved very appropriate in imagining a powerful bird. Mahīdhara explains the word garutmān as :

> *garutmān garaṇāt, garaṇam galanam bhakṣaṇam asyāsti iti garutmān aśanāyavān ityarthaḥ.*

Here the characteristics of eating snakes is hinted upon. This feature further developed into a full-fledged story which was stimulated by the parallel myth of the feud between Vinatā and Kadru. It ultimately leaves Garuḍa as confirmed enemy of the snakes. This legend is hinted at by our poet in the following verse :

> *muktaśeṣavirodhena kuliśavraṇalakṣmaṇā/*
> *upasthitam prāñjalinā vinītena garutmatā//*[37]

It is a very popular image of Viṣṇu lying on the bed of Anantanāga or Śeṣanāga. This picture is described more than once by our poet :

> *vyādiśyate bhūdharatāmavekṣya Kṛṣṇena dehodvahanāya śeṣaḥ//*[38]
> *amum yugāntocitayoganidraḥ saṃhṛtya lokān puruṣo'dhiśete//*[39]
> *śāpānto me bhujagaśayanādutthite śārṅgapāṇau/*[40]

Viṣṇu is described as wearing the kaustubha gem on his chest. This unique gem is believed to have come out of the milk ocean at the time of churning. Kālidāsa refers to this feature :

> *kaustubhākhyam apām sāraṃ vibhrāṇaṃ vṛhatorasā/*[41]

## ŚIVA

Śiva is the third deity of the Trinity. He is also Kālidāsa's favourite. It is no wonder that Kālidāsa directly or indirectly mentions many legends about Lord Śiva. He is the hero of Kālidāsa's epic *Kumārasambhava*. Naturally the poet fully utilises all his scope to describe most of the feats of Lord Śiva, using significant epithets which are connected with particular myths.

---

37. *Raghu.*, 10.13.
38. *Kumāra.*, 3.13.
39. *Raghu.*, 13.6.
40. *Megha.*, *Uttara*, 47.
41. *Raghu.*, 10.10.

Lord Śiva, as we know him, is the product of the Purāṇic age. Rudra of the Vedic age may be called his earlier version. Through a long-drawn process of evolution the Vedic storm-god transformed into the Purāṇic image of the god, in-charge of destruction. On way to the transformation it gathered numerous myths which proved very popular over the ages.

The process of evolution can be noticed from a very early age. The natural phenomena of storm, cloud, lightning and rain gave rise to a many-faceted image, which again developed quite independently in the Purāṇic literature. The special attributes of Rudra and Agni of the earlier literature intermingled with some more benign and benevolent qualities and brought out an image which has a dual personality containing protective and destructive forces. This is the peculiarity of Purāṇic Śiva.

Of the numerous legends gathered around Śiva, the Dakṣa episode can be considered the most important one. The poet categorically states that Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa was the wife of Śiva in her previous life and when her humiliation from her father became unbearable she finished her life by self-immolation :

*athāvamānena pituḥ prayuktā*
*Dakṣasasya kanyā bhavapūrvapatnī/*
*Satī satī yogavisṣṛṭadehā/*
*tām janmane śailavadhūm prapede//*[42]

There are many aspects of the legend such as the identity of Dakṣa, the reason behind Dakṣa's insult and Satī's self-immolation and moreover Śiva's remarriage. Kālidāsa naturally deals with the rebirth of Satī as the daughter of Himālaya because she was destined to be Śiva's wife again. This part forms the major part of the epic *Kumārasambhava*. Other details of the story can be found in the *MBh*. and Purāṇas.

*Bhāgavata*[43], *Viṣṇupurāṇa*[44], *MBh.—droṇaparvan, Sauptika parvan*[45] and *Śānti parvan*[46]—all give this story with varying details.

Satī was born to Dakṣa and Prasūti (alias Asiknī). She was given to Śiva in marriage. But later on Dakṣa got annoyed with Śiva. *Bhāgvata*[47] says that

42. *Kumāras.*, 1.21.
43. 4.1.1.
44. 8.11.
45. Ch. 18.
46. Ch. 342.
47. 4.4.

once in an assembly of gods, all of them except Śiva stood up as Dakṣa arrived. This infuriated him. *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*[48], however, assigns the reason of Daskṣa's anger as the abduction of Satī by Śiva. Whatever it is, out of anger Dakṣa started a sacrifice, invited all and deliberately excluded Śiva and Satī. Satī came to the sacrifice uninvited against the wishes of Śiva. Not only was she ill-treated by her father, but also she was made to hear her husband abused at the assembly of sages. She could not bear and ended her life then and there.

When Śiva came to know of this, his anger knew no bounds. He created two monsters from his matted hair, called Bīrabhadra and Bhadrakālī. They destroyed everything and killed everybody in sight, including Dakṣa. The rampage went on until Śiva came to his senses and called them back.

An independent part of the legend describes that when Tārakāsura became invincible the gods were in dire need of an able army-general. It was told that only the son born of Śiva and his wife could take that position. So Śiva's remarriage became imperative. Kālidāsa took this part as his plot for the epic. *Skandapurāṇa* (*prabhāsa khaṇḍa*) narrates how Satī was reborn as Himālaya's daughter.

At this stage the principal myth is the burning of Madana. This was given a detailed and beautiful treatment by our poet. There are more myths regarding Kārttikeya's birth which are to be discussed later.

The epithet Nīlakaṇṭha and its equivalents like Śitikaṇṭha[49] refer to the legend about drinking of poison by Śiva. In the *Meghadūta* the same idea crops up as :

*bhartuḥ kaṇṭhacchaviriti gaṇaiḥ sādaraṃ vīkṣyamāṇaḥ*/[50] etc.

The story goes like this—when the churning of the milk ocean was in full swing, Vāsuki served as the churning rope for the rotation of mount Mandara, the churning rod. As the churning became too intense, Vāsuki vomitted deadly poison which threatened the creation with total extinction. To protect it, Śiva drank it up but did not gulp it down. He put it into his throat, which turned blue under the impact.[51] In the *MBh.*, *Anuśāsana*

---

48. 7.66-67.
49. *Kumāra.*, 6.81.
50. *Megha.*, *Pūrva*, 33.
51. *MBh*, *Ādi*, 19.42-44.

*parvan*, however, two more reasons for the dark colouring have been offered :

> *tripuravadhārtham dīkṣāmupagatasya Rudrasya Uśanasā jaṭā śirasā utkṛtya prayuktastataḥ prādurabhūta bhujagāstairasya bhujagaiḥ pīḍyamānaḥ kaṇṭho nīlatāmupagataḥ. Pūrve ca manvantare svāyambhuve nārāyaṇahastagrahaṇāt nīlakaṇṭhatvameva ca.*[52].

Destruction of Tripura is a well-known feat of Lord Śiva. Kālidāsa hints at the feat by using the name Tripurāri. Maya, along with Vidyunmālī and Tāraka[53] obtained a boon from Brahmā that their fortresses would be invincible to all except Śiva and he too would have to destroy them with one arrow only. Thus secured, they made an iron fort on the earth, a silver fort in the heaven, and a golden one in the higher region. Only once these three fortresses would combine. Śiva destroyed them on that particular day with one arrow.[54] Kālidāsa categorically mentions the feat in the following :

> *saṃsaktābhistripuravijayo gīyate kinnarībhiḥ/*[55]

and also in

> *viśvavasuprāgraharaiḥ pravīṇaiḥ saṅgīyamānatripurāvadānaḥ/*[56]

It would not be irrelevant to note that this myth has its origin in *KYV*[57] where the three forts and their destruction by Rudra are narrated.

Kālidāsa draws our attention time and again to various special features of Śiva. Among these special features, most important are his three eyes, dress of skin, having weapons like *pināka*, *śūla* and the like, having followers like spirits etc. Some of these features are mentioned by the poet in the following verse :

> *vapurvirūpākṣamalakṣyajanmatā*
> *digambaratvena niveditaṃ vasu/*
> *vareṣu yad bālamṛgākṣi mṛgyate*
> *tadasti kiṃ vyastamapi trilocane//*[58]

---

52. *MBh.*, *Anuśāsana*, 342.26.
53. The names vary with the Purāṇas.
54. *Mat.*, 129.20-34
    *MBh.*, *Vana*, 30-34.
55. *Megha.*, *Pūrva*, 56.
56. *Kumāra.*, 7.48.
57. 6.6.2.3.
58. *Kumāra.*, 5.72.

These features are mentioned in different Purāṇas also. Different myths are associated with procurement of these accessories.

It has already been mentioned that the conception of Śiva has its origin in that of Vedic Rudra. Macdonell[59] assumes that Rudra was described as Paśupati in the Vedic literature[60] because he was believed to take care of unhoused cattle. Later on, this epithet came to be attached with Siva, but with a changed meaning.

*Vārāhapurāṇa*[61], however, gives an interesting account of the name Paśupati. When the rampage at the sacrifice of Dakṣa was going on, all the gods assumed, out of fear, forms of beasts (*devāśca sarve paśutām upeyuḥ*). When calmed down, he called himself Paśupati, the lord of beasts. It seems that Kālidāsa had this idea in his mind, when he described :

*vidrutakratumṛgānusāriṇaṃ yena vāṇamasṛjad vṛṣadhvajaḥ//*[62]

Śiva is described as wearing the skin of an elephant :

*nṛtyārambhe hara paśupaterārdranāgājinecchām*
*śāntodvegastimitanayanam dṛṣṭabhaktirbhavānyā/*[63]

The same feature is mentioned here also :

*gajājinaṃ śonitavinduvarṣi ca/*[64]

*Varāhapurāṇa*[65] has another story to assign its reason. At the time of killing of demon Andhaka, one of its associates, Nīla assumed the form of an elephant. Bīrabhadra, the follower of Rudra, took the appearance of a lion and by killing the elephant gave the skin to Rudra for his wear. Later on, for some peculiar reason the skin of the elephant was changed to that of a tiger and Śiva came to be known as Kṛttivāsa.

The epithet 'bhūtapati' originally meant 'lord of all beings'. Later on, the etymology changed to mean the departed souls. Accordingly '*preta*' or spirits were described as Śiva's followers. *Padmapurāṇa* (*kriyāyogasāra*)[66] refers

59. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 75.
60. *AV.*, 2.6.4.1.
*ŚBr.*, 2.7.3.3.
61. *Var.*, 33.11.
62. *Raghu.*, 11.44.
63. *Megha.*, *Pūrva*, 36.
64. *Kumāra.*, 5.67.
65. *Var.*, 27.15-18.
66. 5.130.

to him as '*pretānāṃ pataye namaḥ*'. Kālidāsa frequently calls him Bhūtapati or Bhūtanātha. He finds a place for the spirits in his description also :

*api śayanasakhībhyo dattavācaṃ kathañcit*
*pramathamukhavikārairhāsayāmāsa gūḍham*/[67]

Kālidāsa more than once draws our attention to three eyes of Śiva. This is so because this third eye was instrumental in the burning of Madana. This feature is emphasised in names like Trilocana, Tryambaka, Triyambaka, Virūpākṣa etc.

It is peculiar that *ṚV* describes Rudra as having three eyes :

*tryambakaṃ yajāmahe sugandhiṃ puṣṭivardhanaṃ*/[68]

It could not have actually meant having three eyes as Sāyaṇa and Mahīdhara explain. It only indicates that the word already lost its original sense by their time.

*MBh.* (*Anuśāsanaparvan*[69]) tells us how Śiva got his third eye. Once Pārvatī playfully covered up both the eyes of Śiva. At once, a third eye sprang up on his forehead. In the disputed part of the *Kumārasambhava*, the peculiarity of this third eye is clearly stated :

*bhālasthale locanamedhamānā-*
*dhamadharībhūtaravindunetram*/
*yugāntakālocitahavyavāham*
*mīnadhvajaploṣaṇamādadhānām*//[70]

Śiva's vehicle is a bull. He is often called as Vṛṣāṅka or Vṛṣavāhana. Kālidāsa humorously draws the picture in the *Kumārasambhava* :

*iyaṃ ca te'nyā purato viḍambanā*
*yadūḍhayā vāraṇarājahāryayā*/
*vilokya vṛddhokṣamādhiṣṭhitam tvayā*
*mahājano smeramukho bhaviṣyati*//[71]

The *MBh.* tells us that cows were born on earth from Surabhi, the celestial cow. The flow of milk from all those cows reached Śiva's territory

---

67. *Kumāra*. 7.95.
68. *ṚV*., 7.59.12.
69. 140.28-29.
70. *Kumāra*., 12.12.
71. *Ibid*., 5.70.

and annoyed him. He opened his third eye and the flame thereof made different colours to the skin of the cows. To pacify him Prajāpati gave him a bull to be his vehicle.

If we trace the origin of this myth we find that the word vṛṣabha originally meant 'one who gives rain' :

*pra vabhrave vṛṣabhāya śvitice*/[72]
*tvam agne vṛṣabhaḥ puṣṭivardhanaḥ*/[73]
*sahasraśṛṅgo vṛṣabho yaḥ samudrādudācarat*/[74]

Rudra, Agni and Sūrya are described as vṛṣabha or the rain-causing factor. This meaning was happy particularly in the context of Rudra as the god of storm. Gradually the meaning was forgotten and was replaced by the then meaning, i.e. a bull.

Kālidāsa frequently mentions the eight forms of Śiva. The opening verse of his drama *Śākuntalam* describes these forms at length. It appears that the conception is quite ancient bearing on the attributes of Rudra of the Vedic period. *Sāṅkhyāyana Brāhmaṇa*[75] refers to these. *Viṣṇu*[76], *Vāyu*[77] and *Varāha*[78] *purāṇa*-s also mention them. The story relating to the conception goes thus : at the beginning of *kalpa,* while Brahmā was meditating upon the birth of a son like himself, a child, deep blue in colour, appeared on his lap. The child urged him to give him a name and so Brahmā named him Rudra. He cried seven times more and Brahmā in order to pacify him gave him seven more names. Thus he got eight names for eight forms. These forms are Sun, Water, Earth, Wind, Fire, Sky, Moon and Yajamāna. The poet frequently calls him Aṣṭamūrti also.

Candramaulin or its synonym is a common and popular name for Śiva. Two legends are connected with this name. Most of the

---

72. *ṚV.*, 2.33.8.
73. *Ibid.*,1.31.5.
74. *Ibid.*, 7.1.3.
75. 6.2-4.
76. 1.8.2-7
77. 27.3-6.
78. 33.3-4.

Purāṇas state that the moon got over his consumption by the grace of Śiva and so decided to reside under his protection.[79] The *Skanda Purāṇa* (*prabhāsa*[80]), however, says that at the churning of the milk ocean, the moon came out and praised Kālabhairava who asked him to have a boon of his choice. The moon asked for a place on his head and he agreed. Kālidāsa refers to this feature in many places. One of them is ;

*candreṇa nityaṃ pratibhinnamauleś-*
*cūḍāmaṇeh kiṃ grahaṇam harasya*/[81]

Kālidāsa describes the burning of Medana in detail in his *Kumārasambhava*. This story is also told by other Purāṇas. Names like Anaṅgaśāsana, and Madanāntaka have arisen from this myth.

The meaning of the word *girīśa* is 'one who lies on the mountain'. It is remarkable that *ŚYV*[82]calls Śiva 'Giriśanta' which is explained by Mahīdhara as residing in Kailāsa. It seems that the name of mount Kailāsa is connected with Śiva from an early age.

We have already seen that the *Kumārasambhava* points out some special characteristics of Śiva. There he is described as 'Digambara'. *Padmapurāṇa* (*kriyāyogasāra*[84]) calls him the same because of his association with the spirits.

Śiva is described as covered with ashes :

*stanadvaye'smin haricandanāspade*
*padaṃ citābhasmarajaḥ kariṣyati*/[85]

Ashes signify total renunciation. They have also a close relationship with fire. The original Rudra-aspect of Śiva had some connection with fire. Hence the later image of Śiva retains some contact with fire and consequently with the ashes. On the other hand, his association with death prompted his followers to draw some connection with the ashes from funeral pyre also.

It will not be irrelevant to note that a particular myth is repeatedly hinted at in the spurious part of the *Kumārasambhava*. It is also remarkable

---

79. *BV. brahmakhaṇḍa*, 9.49-52 This legend will be discussed later in detail.
80. 7.47-51.
81. *Kumāra*. 7.35.
82. 3.61.
83. 5.72.
84. 5.334.
85. *Kumāra*., 5.69.

that this story is never mentioned in any way in any part of Kālidāsa's accepted composition. The myth is about the killing of the demon Andhaka by Śiva. In the twelfth canto of the *Kumārasambhava* it is stated that Śiva killed Andhaka with the help of his bow called Pināka[96]. Again in the first verses of both the fourteenth and fifteenth cantos we find the words '*andhakaśatrusūnunā*' and '*nandanamandhakadviṣo*' respectively. In the *Kumārasambhava* we find '*andhakadveṣitanujamanvagāt*'.[87] All these indicate that the myth of killing Andhaka developed a little later than Kālidāsa's own time.

After the Trinity, we may discuss Indra. His position is peculiar in Hindu religion. He was the mightiest god in the Vedic period but his position altered for worse in later ages. Nevertheless, myths and legends gathered around him in abundance. Kālidāsa let us have glimpses of several of these legends either referring to them directly or hinting at them by use of significant epithets. Some of these legends date back to the Vedic period, some are clearly later developments. It is remarkable that older myths reflect the glorious status of the god while the latter ones often make him a person of ridicule. The gradual fall of his position can be clearly understood by his change of personality brought out in these myths.

## INDRA

The most famous and popular of all the legends concerning Indra is his killing of the demon Vṛtra. Frequent uses of such epithets as 'vṛtrahā' as in :

*tutoṣa vīryātiśayena vṛtrahā*/[88]

or, 'vṛtraśatru' as in :

*kruddhe'pi pakṣacchidi vṛtraśatrāvavedanājñaṃ kuliśakṣatānām*/[89]

certify the popularity of this legend. This story has its root in the *ṚV*, where numerous references to the enmity and fight are found.[90] Various interpreta-

86. Cf., *dṛptāndhakaprāṇaharam pinākam*. *Kumāra*., 12.19
87. 14.8.
88. *Raghu*., 3.62.
89. *Kumāra*., 1.20.
90. *ṚV*., 1.16.80.
1.32.
1.52.6.
1.80.4.
1.103.2. and many more.

tions are given by Eastern and Western scholars alike to ascertain the truth of the myth. Indra was definitely the personified form of the rain and thunderstorm. But his true identity was soon lost in a haze of later conjectures and Indra came out as the all powerful king of gods while Vṛtra was a powerful demon. The main points of the story describe that it was not an easy task for Indra to kill Vṛtra and after some unsuccessful attempts he could kill him with his weapon Vajra. The weapon was made of the bones of the sage Dadhīci.[91] The *Mahābhārata* gives a detailed versoin of the story[92].

Not only Vṛtra, Indra is hailed for killing other demons also. The name Purandara used by our poet signifies the destruction of 'pura' or forts by Indra. He uses the name many times, as in the following :

*tataḥ prahasyāpabhayaḥ purandaraṃ punarbabhāṣe turagasya rakṣitā/*[93]

Vedic texts supply us with the root of this myth. There we find Indra as destroying the forts of Śambara .

*yaḥ śambaraṃ parvateṣu kṣiyantam*
*catvārimśyaṃ śarad yamanvabindat/*
*ojāyamānaṃ yo ahim jaghāna*
*dānvṃ śayānam sa janāsa Indraḥ//*[94]

Śambara's forts are famous because those were numerous. Sometimes it is said that there were a hundred of them :

*yaḥ śatam śambarasya puro vibhedasmāneva pūrviḥ/*[95]

The *Vāmanapurāṇa*, however, gives another reason for this name. It says that Indra killed the demon Pura, son of Mahābali.[96]

Kālidāsa hints at the killing of the demon Namuci by Indra by calling him the enemy of Namuci : '*Namucerarayo*'.[97] This episode is remarkable

---

91. *Ibid.*, 1.84.13.
*KVY.*, 5.5.6.6.
92. *MBh. śānti*, 342, 39-41.
*udyoga*, 10.39.
93. *Raghu.*, 3.51.
94. *ṚV.*, 1.12.12.
95. *Ibid.*, 2.14.6.
96. Mani Vettam ; *Puranic Encyclopaedia*, p. 326.
97. *Raghu.*, 9.22.

because of certain peculiarities. Even in the earlier texts[98] the manner of the killing drew attention of the observers. All the versions of the story agree that Namuci entered into a pact with Indra that he would not be killed with something dry or wet, nor could he be killed in the daytime or at night. So Indra killed him with foam which is neither dry nor wet and the time was dawn which is neither day nor night.

Another old legend which has its base in the *ṚV* tells us that Indra cut off the wings of the mountains and made them stable. In the *Śukla Yajurveda* we find the epithet 'gotrabhit',[99] in the *ṚV* it is stated that :

*tvaṃ tamindra parvataṃ mahāmūruṃ vajreṇa vajrin parvaśaścakartitha/*[100]

Sāyaṇa in his commentary on a hymn of the *ṚV*[101] gives the gist of the story :

*itastataḥ prakarṣeṇāñcato gacchataḥ sapakṣān parvatān ojasā valena dṛṃhat pakṣacchedaṃ kṛtvā bhūmau dṛḍhīcakāra.*

It is accepted that in the kṛtayuga all the mountains had wings. They used to fly about which sometimes played havoc. The gods requested Indra to put an end to this peril. Consequently Indra cut off their wings with his weapon '*vajra*'. Kālidāsa was well aware of this legend. He refers to this myth more than once. Different aspects of the story are explained in different verses. He states that when confronted by the king of the gods the mountains put up stiff resistance :

*pakṣacchedodyataṃ śakraṃ śilāvarṣīva parvataḥ/*[102]

The mountains hid in the ocean to escape onslaught :

*pakṣacchidā gotrabhidāttagandhāḥ śaraṇyam enaṃ śataśo mahīdhrāḥ/*[103]

He categorically mentions that Maināka mountain escaped disfiguring as he got a timely warning from his friend wind :

---

98. *ṚV.*, 1.53.7.
*KYV.*, 1.1.8.7.
*ŚBr.*, 12.7.31.
99. Cf., *gotrabhidāṃ govidaṃ vajravāhuṃ* ... etc. 17.38.
100. 1.57.6.
101. 2.17.5.
102. *Raghu.*, 4.40.
103. *Ibid.*, 13.7.

*asūta sā nāgavadhūpabhogyam Maināakam ambhonidhivaddhasakhyam/
kruddhe'pi pakṣacchidi vṛtraśatrāv avedanājñaṃ kuliśakṣatāṇām//*[104]

In many places Indra is described to have thousand eyes. The poet uses the names Sahasrākṣa and Sahasralocana. There are two legends which account for this peculiar feature.

The *Mbh.* connects the feature with the creation of the beautiful damsel Tilottamā.[105] Two demons named Sunda and Upasunda became invincible. To make a hitch between them, Brahmā ordered Viśvakarman to create a maiden of unparalleled beauty. To match the order Viśvakarman took ingredients from all the beautiful things of the world and created Tilottamā. She was so lovely that when she started going round the gods in veneration, Brahmā could not take his eyes off her. Similar was the condition of Indra. He found his two eyes inadequate to enjoy the exquisite beauty and immediately thousand eyes appeared on him to serve his purpose.

But the other story is of a more serious nature. Different versions of this story are found in different texts, yet the main points remain the same. Indra felt a lustful attraction towards Ahalyā, wife of the sage Gautama. Once when Gautama was away for bathing, Indra took his disguise and took Ahalyā to bed. The sage returned early enough to catch them red-handed. His curse made Indra lose his virility. Moreover, his entire body was stamped with thousand genital marks. Indra was so ashamed that he could not face the world after that. He worshiped goddess Indrākṣī who changed the offending marks into eyes.[106] In another version the marks were changed by the grace of the Sun.[107] The poet draws our attention to this peculiar feature in the following :

*tasmin maghonas tridaśān vihāya sahasram akṣṇām yugapat papāta/*[108]

His immoral advancement towards Ahalyā is mentioned clearly in the *Vikramorvaśīyam* :

*Ahalyākāmukasya mahendrasya* ... etc.[109]

---

104. *Kumāra* ,, 1.20.
105. *Ādi.*, 215.
106. *Pp. Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa*, 54.46-47.
107. *BV.*, *Śrīkṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa*, 47.31-32.
108. *Kumāra.*, 3.1.
109. 2.8 ff. 3.

Another epithet which is frequently used by Kālidāsa is Śatakratu. Purāṇic authorities state that he got the position of the king of gods by successful completion of hundred sacrifices. It was also understood that he would have to hand over his position to anybody who would be able to repeat such a performance. For this, he was ever-alert to prevent by hook or by crook such a feat. Our poet very appropriately makes him say :

*tathā vidur māṃ munayaḥ śatakratuṃ*
*dvitīyagāmī na hi śabda eṣa naḥ.*/[110]

In the Vedic period the word *kratu* was used to mean 'work',[111] because he was believed to have performed hundreds of great deeds. But in later ages the meaning changed. *Kratu* came to mean 'sacrifice'. The *Brahmavaivasvatapurāṇa* states :

*purā śatamakho darpāt kṛtvā makhaśatam mudā*/
*babhūva sarvadevānām adhyakṣaḥ sampadā yutaḥ*//[112]

That Indra prevented completion of the hundredth sacrifice by others more than once is referred to by our poet. He describes in this connection the heated verbal exchange between Raghu and Indra in the third canto of the *Raghuvamśa*. In this dialogue we notice a reference to Sagara's sacrifice which could not be completed owing to Indra's resistance :

*ato'yamaśvaḥ Kapilānukāriṇā pitus tvadiyasya mayāpahāritaḥ*/
*alaṃ prayatnena tavātra mā nidhāḥ padam padavyām Sagarasya santateḥ*//[113]

Vedic Indra has undergone drastic changes of image through the ages. The almighty god of the Vedic age lost much of his power and position to other gods of subsequent ages. In the process of change, he is depicted as a subordinate god who is in awkward position off and on and has to seek help not only from the famous Trinity but also from mortals. Kālidāsa mentions at least two such cases. In the *Śākuntalam*, he sends king Duṣyanta to Indra's help and in the *Vikramorvaśīyam* he sends Purūravas.

Later mythologies developed a cosy family for Indra. Śacī is his wife and Jayanta is his son. His horse is called Uccaiśravas, his charioteer is Mātali. These features were firmly established in our poet's time.

---

110. *Raghu.*, 3.49.
111. *devo devān kratunā paryabhūṣayat*, *ṚV.*, 2.12.7.
112. *Śrīkṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa*, 47.6.
113. *Raghu.*, 3.50.

The name Śacī is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas. She is believed to be the daughter of the demon (alternately sage) Puloman. *ṚV*, at least at one place[114] refers to Indra as Śacīpati. *AV*. and *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*[115] do the same. Sāyaṇa gives the meaning of the word Śacī as 'work' in his commentary in a *mantra* of the *ṚV*.[116] In later ages the etymology lost its true meaning and a maiden was supplied to fill up the gap. Kālidāsa mentions the fully formed family more than once; for instance :

*... yathā Jayantena Śacīpurandarau*|[117]

and :

*Paulomīsambhaveneva Jayantena Purandaraḥ*||[118]

The name Mātali goes back to the Vedic age.[119] In the *AV*. too we see that Indra and Mātali are drawn together :

*yanmātali rathakṛtam amṛtam veda bheṣajam*|

*tad indro apsu praveśayat tadāpo datta bheṣajam*||[120]

In later ages *Vāmanapurāṇa* narrates a story about the birth of Mātali and his attaining the position of the charioteer of Indra.[121]

In this context it would not be irrelevant to discuss the Indradhvaja festival, mentioned categorically by the poet. It seems that by the time of Kalidāsa it was an established and popular ritual. The festival marks the erection of a flag-staff to please Indra and thus to get rain. Both the *Mbh.*[122] and the *Bṛhatsamhitā*[123] state that Indra gave this staff to Uparicaravasu, who erected it in the month of Bhādra. *Bṛhatsamhitā* goes one step further to describe that originally the staff was given to Indra by Viṣṇu to drive off the

---

114. *ṚV*., 1.106.6.
115. *AV*., 20.3.27.2.
16.13.134.1.
6.13.135.1.
*KYV*., 4.3.4.8.
116. *Śacīti karmanāma*.
117. *Raghu*., 3.23.
118. *Vik*., 5.14.
119. *ṚV*., 10.43.3.
120. *AV*., 11.3.8.13.
121. *Vp*., 69.141-142.
122. *MBh*., *Ādi*, 63.17-18.
123. *Bṛhat*., 43.5-6, 23-24.

demons. Then the staff came to be associated with Indra and its erection amounted to pleasing him and getting his blessings. Kālidāsa brings the subject of this festival cleverly in his description :

*puruhūtadhvajasyeva tasyonnayanapaṅktayaḥ|*
*navābhyutthānadarśinyo nananduḥ saprajāḥ prajāḥ||*[124]

Like Indra, another Vedic god, who lost his importance in subsequent ages is Varuṇa.

## VARUṆA

In the Purāṇas we see that the powerful god of earlier literature is demoted to a class of minor gods. He is known as the god of water or the ocean. Kālidāsa's reference to this god reflects this state of fading glory. Varuṇa is mentioned as 'one of the crowd'. He brings him up most casually :

*kiñcāyam aridurvāraḥ pāṇau pāśaḥ pracetasaḥ|*
*mantreṇa hatavīryasya phaṇino dainyam āśritaḥ||*[125]

Varuṇa is described as having *pāśa* as his weapon even in the Vedas, for example :

*ye te pāśā varuṇa saptasapta tredhā tiṣṭhanti viṣitā ruśantaḥ|*[126]

Vedic seers call him '*bhūripāśau*' and '*pāśi*'. *Agnipurāṇa* goes one step further to describe this *pāśa* as *nāgapāśa*,[127] taking for granted that snakes live in the ocean.

Another Vedic god who shared the same fate as Varuṇa is Yama.

## YAMA

Yama enjoyed quite a glorious position in the Vedic literature, but in later ages he too was reduced to the class of insignificant gods. In this period his fame is confined to the world of the dead. He is described as the god who keeps close watch on mortals regarding their conduct and as the time ripens he takes them away from this world of the living. This association with death makes his image awesome. He bears a *daṇḍa* (staff) in his hand and rides on a buffalo. Kālidāsa makes a passing remark about the god :

---

124. *Raghu.*, 4.3.
125 *Kumāra.*, 2.21.
126. *AV.*, 1-6.
127. *Ap.*, 64.3.

*Yamo'pi vilikhan bhūmiṃ daṇḍenāstamitatviṣā/*
*kurute'sminnamoghe'pi nirvāṇalātalāghavam//*[128]

In Kālidāsa's time this later conception was already fully developed. Several Purāṇas[129] have definite contribution regarding this image.

Some of the gods of the Vedic age have suffered a total change in their images in the later period. We can name Sūrya and Candra among them. Kālidāsa does not refer to any myth about Sūrya but he mentions a few about Candra. The later conception of Candra is a totally changed one from the Vedic Soma.

## CANDRA

Candra was a popular god in the age of mythology. He retains almost nothing of his earlier version except a synonym in Soma. He has quite a number of myths to his credit, which proves his popularity over the ages. Kālidāsa hints at some of these legends.

The poet uses the name rohiṇīpati :

*adhyaśeta śayanam priyāsakhaḥ śaradābhram iva rohiṇīpatiḥ*[130]/

It indicates that Rohiṇī was considered the dearest among his wives. Candra and Rohiṇī were considered a loving couple from very ancient times. The story goes like this : Candra was married to all the twentyseven daughters of Dakṣa.[131] All the accounts of the story agree that Candra had excessive attachment towards Rohiṇī. This infuriated other wives who complained about such partiality to their father. Dakṣa instructed his son-in-law to maintain status quo but Candra paid no heed. Dakṣa was

---

128. *Kumāra.*, 2.23.
129. *Kā.*, 79.114-116.
*Mat.*, 261.12-14.
*Mar.*, 77.78.
*Var.*, 20.12.
*Sk.*, *Prabhāsa.*
130. *Kumāra.*, 8.82.
131. *BV. Brahmakhaṇḍa*, 9.42-52.
*MBh.*, 1.66.6,75.9.
*Śalya*, 35.42-47.
*Śānti* 342.5.58.
*Śp.*, *Jñānasaṃhitā*, 45.6-12.
*Sk. Prabhāsa.*

very angry and cursed Candra to be a victim of consumption. This point of the legend is supported by Kālidāsa who states :

*Dakṣasya śāpena śaśī kṣayīva/*[132]

There are several different stories as to how the moon got over this calamity. He at least got this redemption that for fifteen days he would be on the wane, and for the rest of the month i.e. another fifteen days he would regain what he had lost.

Kālidāsa frequently refers to the fact that Candra resides on the head of Lord Śiva. The *Skandapurāṇa*[133] says that at the time of the churning of the milk ocean, Candra came out praising Kālabhairava who let him have a boon of his choice. Candra asked for a place on his head. The *Brahmavaivastapurāṇa*, however, states that Candra had to worship Śiva for the cure of his disease and sought his protection by remaining with him. One of the frequent allusions to this effect is :

*divāpi niṣṭhyūtamarīcibhāsā bālyād anāviṣkṛtalāñchanena/*
*Candreṇa nityam pratibhinnamauleś cūḍāmaṇeḥ kim grahaṇaṃ harasya//*[134]

Several texts give different myths about the birth of the moon. The mostly accepted version of the later ages is that the moon came out of the ocean at the time of the churning. Kālidāsa's statement reflects this belief :

*prahlādanam jyotir ajanyanena* ... etc.[135]

The god of war, Kārttikeya, is definitely a product of later ages. We find no beginning in the Vedas. Many later conceptions and ideas merge in a single image to make this god. For this, the conception possesses many bewildering aspects.

## KĀRTTIKEYA

The birth of Kārttikeya is the central theme of Kālidāsa's famous epic *Kumārasambhava*. Unfortunately, it seems, that he has not been able to complete it. The abrupt break of Mallinātha's commentary lends support to this view. The style also, is not uniform. It is, however, universally

---

132. *Kumāra.*, 9.17.
133. *Sk., prabhāsa*, 7.47-51.
134. *Kumāra.*, 7.35.
135. *Raghu.*, 13.4.

accepted that Kālidāsa has completed the first eight cantos of the epic. These cantos are actually a prelude to the birth. The parts which describe Kārttikeya's birth and subsequent happenings are considered spurious and later additions. Hence it is rather difficult to ascertain the form of the myth concerning Kārttikeya through Kālidāsa's own statement. An attempt is made here to trace the signs of various developments on the ground of the use of different significant epithets. At the same time the latter part of the epic is also discussed in order to show later developments of the myth.

The legend of Kārttikeya is rather complicated in nature. *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and different Purāṇas present the story from different aspects and with varying details. They, however, agree in some vital points regarding parenthood, assignment etc. He is the son of Śiva and Pārvatī although Pārvatī did not conceive him in her womb. He is the saviour of the gods from the atrocities of Tārakāsura :

*tasyātmā śitikaṇṭhasya sainā patyamupetya vaḥ*/[136]

The process of birth as described by different texts is rather complex and disputed. Agni, Gaṅgā, six Kṛttikās, wives of Saptarṣi—all are involved in the birth. According to different versions, dif̄ferent personalities claim responsibility for the conception of this idol. His most common name, Kārttikeya, however, indicates that six Kṛttikās have a deep involvement in this matter. The fact, that he has six faces, originates from this point. Kālidāsa accepts this part of the legend when he says :

*ṣaḍānanapītapayodharāsu netā camūnām iva kṛttikāsu*/[137]

The story of the birth goes like this—an army general was needed to head the celestial army to fight Tārakāsura who drove off the gods from paradise. It was known that the son, born to Śiva and Pārvatī, alone, would be able to bear this responsibility. But as it were, after the marriage, Śiva and Pārvatī were lost in each other's campany, without feeling any need to raise a family. The gods got impatient and sent Agni to make them realise the necessity. Agni entered their private chamber in an unopportune moment. The presence of a third party distracted Śiva and losing control on himself he had to ejaculate. He threw his discharge on Agni who was acutely embarrassed and afraid as well. Smeared with the

136. *Kumāra.*, 2.61.
137. *Raghu.*, 14.22.

fiery discharge Agni's agony knew no bounds. At the suggestion of the gods he got rid of the offending mess by having a dip in the water of Gaṅgā. Gaṅgā on the other hand, became extremely agitated and her water dried up. In the meantime, six kṛttikās came to have a bath in the gaṅgā-water. Immediately Gaṅgā transferred the divine seed to their womb and the Kṛttikās were astounded to find themselves pregnant after the bath. Out of fear and embarrassment they got rid of the embryo in a bush of reeds on the bank of the river. Then ultimately this child came to the hands of Pārvatī to be known as her child. The whole story is summarised in the following by the poet :

*ataḥ śṛṇuṣvāvahitena vṛttam*
*vījam yad agnau nihitam mayā tat/*
*saṃkrāntam antas tridaśāpagāyām*
*tato'ragāhe sati kṛttikāsu//*
*garbhatvam āptam tad amogham etat*
*tābhiḥ śarastambamadhi nyadhāyi/*
*babhūva tatrāyam abhūtapūrvo*
*mahotsavo'śeṣacarācarasya//*[138]

The name Skanda is derived from the word '*skanna*', which means 'broken' or 'disturbed'. The disturbed amour of the divine couple is indicated by the term. Kālidāsa clearly confirms that part of the story in the following :

*atra skandam niyatavasatim puṣpamedhīkṛtātmā*
*puṣpasāraiḥ snapayatu bhavān vyomagaṅgājalārdraiḥ/*
*rakṣāhetor navaśaśibhṛtām vāsavīnām camūnām*
*atyādityam hutavahamukhe sambhṛtam taddhi tejaḥ//*[139]

His birthplace gave rise to such names as Śarajanmā, Śaravaṇabhava and the like. Kālidāsa uses both the names :

*ārādhyainaṃ śaravaṇabhavaṃ.........*/[140]

and

*umāvṛṣāṅkau śarajanmanā yathā*/[141]

Mayūra or peacock is considered his vehicle. Kālidāsa is well-aware of the fact as is realised by his statements like :

138. *Kumāra.*, 11.12-13.
139. *Megha. Pūrv*, 46.
140. *Ibid.*, 45.
141. *Raghu.*, 3.23.

*jyotirlekhāvalayi galitam yasya varham bhavāni*
*putrapremṇā kuvalayadalaprāpi karṇe karoti/*
*dhautāpāṅgam haraśaśirucā pāvakestam mayūram*
*paścād ádrigrahaṇagurubhir garjitair nartayethāḥ//*[142]

Here also the term *pāvaki* is deliberately put to signify Agni's involvement in the birth of Kārttikeya.

One of Kārttikeya's achievement was to pierce the mountain Krauñca. *Varāhapurāña* calls him krauñcavidhvamsa.[143] *Skandapurāṇa* (*pūrvārdha*) calls him krauñcāri.[144] Kālidāsa refers to the feat also :

*abhavad asya tato guṇavattaram sanagaram nagarandhrakaraujasaḥ/*[145]

He mentions the krauñcarandhra in *Pūrvamegha* too,[146] In the questionable part of the *Kumārasambhava* we find a remark about this feat :

*krauñcasya randhraṃ viśikhena nirmame/*[147]

In Kālidāsa's writings we find some references to Balarāma, not as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu but as the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa.

## BALARĀMA

Balarāma is also known as Balabhadra and Baladeva. He originated in the womb of Devakī but was transplanted into that of Rohiṇī, the other wife of Vasudeva in order to be protected from the wrath of Kaṃsa[148] This peculiar feature gave rise to the name Saṅkarṣaṇa.

His principal weapon was a plough for which he was named Halabhṛt. Kālidāsa uses this name in the *Meghadūta* :

*aṃsanyaste sati halabhṛto mecake vāsasiva/*[149]

His other name Lāṅgalī, which Kālidāsa also uses, means the same. He is said to have dragged the river Yamunā nearer with a plough for his own conve-

---

142. *Megha. Pūrva*, 47.
143. *Var.*, 25.42.
144. *Sk.*, 25.17.
145. *Raghu.*, 9.2.
146. *Megha. Pūrva*, 60.
147. *Kumāra.* 15.35.
148. *Bh.*, 10.8-10.
149. *Megha. Pūrva*, 62.

nience.[150] It is also described that he dragged Hastināpurī alongwith the residents when Bhīṣma, Droṇa and other Kuru leaders kept Śāmba under arrest as he tried to abduct Lakṣmaṇā, daughter of Duryodhana from her *svayamvara*.[151] Kālidāsa is acquainted with this name as is known from the following verse :

> *hitvā hālāmabhimatarasām revatilocanāṅkām*
> *vandhuprītyā samaravimukho Lāṅgalī yaḥ siṣeve*|[152]

Subtle hints at other episodes are intermingled in this verse as well. Here Revatī is referred to as the wife of Balarāma. According to the *Bhāgwata-purāṇa* she was the daughter of Kakudmī. She was exceptionally beautiful. Her father went to Brahmā to be informed about a suitable groom. Brahmā suggested the name of Balarāma and so they were married.[153]

This verse also draws attention to the fact that Balarāma did not take any part in the war fought between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. As Kṛṣṇa sided with the Pāṇḍavas when the war was declared, Balarāma wanted to keep himself neutral. His argument was that both the families stood on the same relation with them, so it would be unfair to support or be against any of them. To be totally aloof he went on a pilgrimage.[154] This took him away from the banks of Yamunā to the banks of Sarasvatī.

As has been said before, the divine family was continuously spreading throughout the ages of the Epics and the Purāṇas. One of such later additions is Kuvera, the caretaker god of wealth.

## KUVERA

Kuvera is one of the insignificant members of Indian Mythology. He is totally a conception of the Purāṇic age. Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* describes him to be the son of Viśravas and Devavarṇinī.[155] He was blessed by Brahmā and assigned the post of the caretaker of the divine wealth. He also got the Puṣpaka chariot and the kingdom of Laṅkā as a gift from him. But later on, his step-brother Rāvaṇa took away these possessions by force from him and drove him away from Laṅkā.

---

150. *Bh.*, 10.65.25-26.
    *Vi.*, 5.8-11.
151. *Bh.*, 10.69, 40-52.
152. *Megha. Pūrva.*, 52.
153. *Bh.*, 9.3.28-35.
154., *Bh.*, 12.75 (latter half); 17.18.
155. *Rām. Uttara*, 3.508.

*Vāyupurāṇa*[156] tells us that he was named Kuvera (literally meaning 'ugly body') as he was not good looking at all.

Kālidāsa refers to his post as the caretaker of wealth by using the name '*dhanapati*' :

*tatrāgāraṃ dhanapatigṛhād uttareṇāsmadiyam*/[157]

The poet confirms his position as the guardian of the northern direction in the statements like :

*Kuveraguptām diśam*/[158]

and

*tataḥ pratasthe kauverīm bhsāvān iva raghor diśam*/[159]

He also refers to his famous vehicle in the following :

*yānaṃ sasmāra kauveraṃ vaivasvatajigīṣayā*/[160]

Alakā, the land of Kuvera is in close vicinity of Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva. For this, he is considered a friend of Kuvera. This fact does not escape Kālidāsa's observation as he states :

*matvā devaṃ dhanapatisakhaṃ yatra sākṣād vasantaṃ*/[161]

Another minor god who has got maximum prominence in Kālidāsa's writings is Madana.

## MADANA

Madana is definitely a god of the later ages and even then belongs to a subordinate position. He can be considered one of the secondary gods, but owing to his part in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* he gets quite an important treatment. Naturally, Kālidāsa uses many of his epithets to signify difierent aspects of his nature and career.

At the beginning of creation, Madana was born of the mind of Brahmā, hence he was named Manobhava, Manasija etc. *Kālikāpurāṇa* gives the reasons for his other famous names in the following :

156. *Vā.*, 2.9.39.
157. *Megha. Uttara*, 15.
158. *Kumāra*, 3.25.
159. *Raghu.*, 4.66.
160. *Ibid.*, 15.45.
161. *Megha. Uttara*, 14.

*yasmāt pramathya cetas tvam jāto'smākam tathāvidheḥ/*
*tasmān manmatho nāmnā tvam loke khyāto bhaviṣyasi//*
*atas tvam kāmanamnāpi khyāto bhava manobhava/*
*mādanan madanākhyas tvaṃ śambhor darpāc ca darpaka/*
*tathā kandarpanāmāsi loke khyāto bhaviṣyasi//*[162]

In some places the name Kandarpa is thus analysed : as soon as Kāma was born, he asked Brahmā : *kaṃ darpayāmi* ? (whom should I make proud?) and so he got the name Kandarpa.[163]

His bow is made of flowers. It is said that there are five special flowers, which are used as arrows. These are *aravinda*, *aśoka*, *cūta*, *navamallikā* and *raktotpala*. From these flowery arrows he got such names as Pañcaśara, Puṣpacāpa and Kusumāyudha. Kālidāsa uses these names extensively.

His arrows are capable of affecting a person in five ways. These are :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *sammohana* | (causing delusion) |
| | *unmādana* | (causing excitement) |
| | *śoṣaṇa* | (drying up) |
| | *tāpana* | (heating) |
| and | *stambhana* | (paralysing) |

Kālidāsa specifically mentions the first one in the *Kumārasambhava* :

*sammohanaṃ nāma ca puṣpadhanvā*
*dhanuṣy amoghaṃ samadhatta vāṇam/*[164]

The condition of Śakuntalā in act III of the *Śākuntalam* can be identified as *tāpana*[165] and the paralysing effect of love is realised in Umā in her '*na yayau na tasthau*' condition as drawn by the poet in the *Kumārasambhava*.[166]

Vasanta or the spring acts his friend and assistant. He, by creating a favourable atmosphere, stimulates the feeling of desire. The poet draws attention to the fact in the following verse :

---

162. *Kā.* 2.44-45.
163. Mani Vettam. *Puranic Encyclopaedia*, p. 378.
164. *Kumāra.*, 3.66.
165. *Śāk.*, III.
166. *Kumāra.*, V.

*tava prasādāt kusumāyudho'pi*
*sahāyam ekam madhum eva labdhvā/*
*kuryām harasyāpi pināakapāṇer*
*dhairyacyutim ke mama dhvanino'nye//*[167]

He describes in his impeccable style the untimely arrival of spring and its effect on the quiet hermitage. The close association of Vasanta and Madana is further confirmed by none other than Rati :

*ayi samprati dehi darśanam smara paryutsuka eṣa mādhavaḥ/*
*dayitāsv anavasthitam nṛṇām na khalu prema calam suhṛjjane//*[168]

The myth of burning of Madana gave rise to the name Anaṅga, meaning 'the bodyless one'. We have already mentioned that once Brahmā cursed Madana for his mischievous behaviour that he would eventually be reduced to ashes by Śiva. He regained his body when at last Śiva married Umā. Our poet describes this event in this manner :

*devās tadante haramūḍhabhāryām*
*kiriṭavaddhāñjalayo nipatya/*
*śāpavasāne pratipannamūrter*
*yayācire pañcaśarasya sevām//*[169]

It has also been said before that Indra was always on the alert lest someone snatched away his position. Whenever a hundredth sacrifice was about to take place he was sure to prevent its completion. Moreover, if a sage was about to attain a particular coveted stage of self-elevation he would invariably try to distract him. In the latter case, he sought the help of loyal *apsarās* and obviously of Madana. This fact is revealed in the following :

*kenābhyasūyā padakāṅkṣiṇā te*
*nitāntadirghair janitā tapobhiḥ/*
*yāvad bhavaty āhitasāyakasya*
*matkārmukasyāsya nideśavarti//*[170]

Kālidāsa further substantiates this statement by way of explaining Śakuntalā's birth, and termination of the penance of the sage *Śātakarṇi* in the *Raghuvaṃśa.*[171]

---

167. *Kumāra.*, 3.10.
168. *Ibid.*, 4.28.
169. *Kumāra.*, 7.92.
170. *Ibid.*, 3.4.
171. *Raghu.*, 13.39.

Rati is Madana's wife. She is also introduced in the epic *Kumārasambhava* and an entire canto is devoted to her relent after Madana's death.

The main legend concerning Madana is his being burnt by Śiva. Most of the Purāṇas[172] give this story. Some of them have slightly varying details regarding the cause of the wrath of Śiva. It is a fact that this aspect of the Madana-myth was still in a fluid state at the time of the poet. The bare skeleton of the story was drawn and different observers were free to fill in according to their own choice. Our poet did the same beautifully and expertly. So in subsequent ages whenever this legend was discussed his version of the story was mentioned as seriously as any of its Purāṇic versions. Although the god has no great achievement to his credit, for his peculiar power over human minds he has acquired a considerable amount of attention in the Purāṇas. It is curious to add here that Rabindra Nath Tagore has utilised the image of Madana in his dance-drama *Citrāṅgadā* where the heroine needed transformation of her appearance to satisfy her lover's (Arjuna's) expectation. This proves that the image of Madana as the love-god is quite firmly established in the Purāṇas, having a direct bearing on subsequent literature.

Later ages were undaunted in personifying natural objects and attaching myths to them to bring credibility. Such an attempt is seen in the personification of Gaṅgā, the holy river.

## GAṄGĀ

The name of Gaṅgā is found only once in the famous *Nadīstuti* of the *ṚV.*[173] The Vedic civilization flourished in the North-west region of India. For this, Sindhu and other western rivers got prominence in the early Vedic literature. With the extension of Vedic culture towards the east, Gaṅgā came to be recognised as the most prominent river. Automatically legends galore were in the making. To add weight to the newly created image patrons connected it in one way or the other to the Trinity. Gradually Gaṅgā attained the position of grace which Sarasvatī enjoyed in the early Vedic period. From the Purāṇas we find a conscious effort to elevate the status of Gaṅgā.

172. *Sp.*, 53.55.
*Pp. bhūmikhaṇḍa*, 77.
*Sk. prabhāsa, Arbuda*, 40.20.
*Sp. jñāna*, 106.

173. *ṚV.*, X.

The origin of Gaṅgā has been described in two ways. In one version[174] she was confined in the '*kamaṇḍalu*' of Brahmā. In another version[175] she originated from melting of Viṣṇu's left toe (small) and then was confined by Brahmā. Kālidāsa takes up the latter when he describes :

*yathaiva ślāghyate Gaṅgā pādena parameṣṭhinaḥ/*[176]

Mahādeva, the third member of the Hindu Trinity is described to be more closely related to Gaṅgā. He is the husband of the holy river. At the time of Gaṅgā's descent from heavenly region to earth she was held by him on his head to ascertain safe landing. The *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* and some others like *Śivapurāṇa*,, *Kālikāpurāṇa* etc. describe her to be the elder daughter of Himālaya, which automatically proves her eligibility to be Śiva's wife.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* gives in details the story of Gaṅgā's descent as Bhagīratha, one of the forefathers of Rāma was the chief executor of the entire project. The story goes like this : Sagara, a powerful king of Ikṣvāku dynasty made arrangements for the hundredth Aśvamedha sacrifice. Indra got anxious for the prospect of losing his position, so he stole the horse and hid it in the hermitage of the sage Kapila. This point is beautifully described by our poet :

*ato'yam aśvaḥ Kapilānukāriṇā*
*pitus tadīyasya mayāpahāritaḥ/*
*alaṃ prayatnena tavātra mā nidhāḥ*
· *padaṃ padavyām Sagarasya santateḥ//*

When the king discovered his horse missing, he sent out his sixty thousand sons to find it. They looked for it everywhere and even dug up the earth to look into the Pātāla. Kālidāsa records this event thus:

*guror yiyakṣoḥ Kapilena medhye*
*rasātalaṃ saṅkramite turaṅge/*
*tadarthamūrvimavadārayadbhiḥ*
*pūrvaiḥ kilāyaṃ parivardhito naḥ//*[178]

---

174. *B. Madhya*, 13.14.
175. *BV. Prakṛti*, 6.41.
*DB.*, 9.
*Vi.*, 2.8.105.
*Mar.*, 57.1.
176. *Kumāra*, 6.70.
177. *Raghu.*, 3.50.
178. *Ibid.*, 13.3.

Taking for granted that Kapila was the mischief-maker they abused him. Immediately the sage opened his eyes and the flame of wrath thereof reduced all of them to ashes. Aṃśumān, the grandson of Sagara, however, succeeded in pacifying the sage and took the sacrificial horse away to complete the sacrifice. Kālidāsa has hinted at this point too :

*so 'ham idānīm aṃśumateva Sagaraḥ pautreṇa pratyāhṛtāśvo yakṣye*/[179]

Generations after generations they tried for the salvation of their forefathers, but did not succeed. Then Bhagīratha set out to achieve the impossible, to bring Gaṅgā to earth, by whose touch the forefathers would be released. He had to please Viṣṇu and Brahmā in the initial stage to arrange for Gaṅgā's release from the confinement. Then he had to take precaution for her forceful descent and so had to please Śiva to make him agree to hold her. On her way Gaṅgā submerged the hermitage of the sage Jahnu who got angry at such arrogance and drank her up. Again Bhagīratha had to pacify him for her release. This incident gave rise to the idea that Gaṅgā was Jahnu's daughter. Kālidāsa calls Gaṅgā by such names as Jahnukanyā more than once :

*tasmād gaccher anukanakhalaṃ śailarājāvatīrṇāṃ*
*Jahnoḥ kanyām Sagaratanayasvargasopānapaṅktiṃ*/[180]

In another place he describes :

*avāryatevotthitavīcihastair jahnor duhitrā sthitayā purastāt*/[181]

The relation between Pārvatī and Gaṅgā as co-wives of Mahādeva, and Gaṅgā's place on the head of Śiva are recorded in the following :

*Gaurivaktrabhṛkuṭiracanāṃ yā vihasy eva phenaiḥ*

*Śambhoḥ keśagrahaṇam akarod indulagnormihastā*/[182]

Kālidāsa hails the great achievement of Bhagīratha here :

*sa senāṃ mahatīṃ karṣan pūrvasāgaragāminīṃ*/
*babhau harajaṭābhraṣṭāṃ Gaṅgām iva Bhagīrathaḥ*//[183]

---

179. *Māl.*, Act V.
180. *Megha. Pūva.*,53
181. *Raghu.*, 15.51.
182. *Megha. Pūrva.*, 5.3.
183. *Roghu.*, 4.32.

Finally Bhagīratha was able to bring Gaṅgā to the hermitage of Kapila and freed his forefathers. This legend seems to be one of the most popular stories of Indian Mythology.[184]

## PĀRVATĪ

Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya is the principal wife of Mahādeva and Gaṅgā stands in a secondary position with her. Our poet has made Umā (alias Gaurī, Pārvatī) the heroine of the *Kumārasambhava*. She is described in her two births in Indian Mythology. Kālidāsa takes up events of the second birth as the theme of his epic. In the first, she was the daughter of Dakṣa and had to end her life following the misconduct of her father. Kālidāsa sums up the incident in the following :

*yadaiva pūrve janane śarīram sā Dakṣaroṣāt sudatī sasarja*/[185]

In the next birth, she was born as the daughter of Himālaya and eventually became wife of Śiva to make the birth of Kārttikeya possible. Many aspects of this later conception have been developed by different Purāṇas. This image can be considered the starting point of the Śakti-cult which proved very popular in later ages.

In this context we may mention another goddess of late origin who enjoyed mild popularity in the Purāṇic age by being associated with Viṣṇu. She is Lakṣmī.

## LAKṢMĪ

The rise of Lakṣmī to fame is detected at a rather later stage of Indian Mythology. In the Vedic texts we have stray references to Śri or Lakṣmī denoting beauty, glory etc. Identification of the word with worldly wealth is definitely done in a considerably later age.

The *Mbh.*[186] and some Purāṇas[187] state that Lakṣmī rose from the ocean at the time of churning. It is also said that once Durvāsas cursed Indra for

---

184. *MBh. Vana.*, 109.
*droṇa.*, 60.
*anuśāsana.*, 4.
*Rām.*, 43 and 44.
*Brm.*, 97.
*DB.*, 2.
185. *Kumāra.*, 1.53.
186. *MBh. Ādi*, 18.35.
187. *Bh.*, 8.8.8.
*Pp. Sṛṣṭi*, 4.58.

showing neglect. The implication of the curse amounted to loss of Lakṣmī. Accordingly Lakṣmī left Indra and hid herself in the ocean. Then the gods resorted to churning in order to regain her.[188] When at last she came out of the ocean Brahmā gave her to Viṣṇu as his consort. From this stage on, Lakṣmī is described everywhere as the wife of Viṣṇu. The *Rāmāyaṇa* highlights this association also :

*atīva Rāmaḥ śuśubhe mudānvito|*
*vibhuḥ Śriyā Viṣṇur ivāmareśvaraḥ||*[189]

This association is also reflected in Kālidāsa's writing :

*tam apahāya kakutsthakulodbhavam*
*puruṣam ātmabhavam ca pativratā|*
*nṛpatim anyam asevata devatā*
*sakamalā kamalāghavamarthiṣu||*[190]

It is a most popular picture of Viṣṇu as lying on the bed of the serpent with Lakṣmī at his feet—that we find in the composition of the poets. Kālidāsa too draws a similar picture :

*Śriyaḥ padmaniṣaṇṇāyāḥ kṣaumāntaritamekhale|*
*aṅke nikṣiptacaraṇamāstīrṇakarapallave||*[191]

Lotus is taken to be the special sign of the goddess. She is called Kamalā and is described to be sitting on a lotus. Her conception as the giver of wealth is a still later development. For this, we find no hint to the factor in the writings of Kālidāsa, nor does he mention the owl as the vehicle of the goddess. This feature must have been added in a much later period.

The name of Lakṣmī automatically draws our attention to Sarasvatī. In later Purāṇas these two goddesses are described side by side and are even said to be closely related.

## SARASVATĪ

Sarasvatī is the personified river in the Vedas. But Purāṇas describe her as the goddess of word and wisdom. Its origin can be traced in the *AV*.[192]

---

188. *Vi.*, 1.8.14.
189. *Rām. Ādi*, 77.29.
190. *Raghu.*, 9.16.
k91. *Ibid.*, 10.8.
192. *iyaṃ yā parameṣṭhinī vāgdevī brahmasaṃśitā|*
*yayaiva saṃsṛje ghoraṃ tayaiva śāntir astu naḥ||*
*AV.*,19.1.9.3.

Here Sarasvatī's close relation with Brahmā is also hinted at. This point is taken up by the later Purāṇas to develop into a myth where she is Brahmā's wife.[193] Brāhmaṇas clearly call her the goddess of word.[194]

The transformation of the river Sarasvatī into the goddess of word is not very clear. Many scholars have offered divergent theories regarding this feature. Whatever the case may be, Kālidāsa describes her as the goddess of knowledge or speech which implies that the transformation was complete by his time. Her authority over speech is confirmed by the poet when he states :

*stutyaṃ stutibhir arthyābhir upatasthe Sarasvatī*/[195]

The same idea is repeated in the *Kumārasambhava* also :

*dvidhā prayuktena ca vāṅmayena Sarasvatī tan mithunaṃ nunāva*/[196]

This is almost all that we can glean out of direct and covert references of gods in the compositions of Kālidāsa.

---

193. *Sp. jñāna.*, 49.77.79.

194. *vāgvai Sarasvatī—Sāṃkhyāṇa br.*, ch. 5.
*Śatapatha br.*, 1.1.4.
*Aitareya br.*, 3.13.

195. *Raghu.*, 4.6.

196. *Kumāra.*, 7.90.

## CHAPTER II

# LEGENDS ABOUT DEMIGODS

After the divine personalities, the semidivine personalities can claim attention. To this class belong the yakṣas, the gandharvas, the kinnaras and the apsarās. These are fully mythical characters. Later texts, however, accept them most naturally. They are depicted as the link between the gods and the mortals. The barrier between these classes is described as most fragile. There was easy exchange of relation between the mortals and the immortals. Certain remote regions of the Himalayas are described as their abode. It is also described that the kinnaras have faces like horses and bodies like human beings. They are famous for their singing abilities. Kālidāsa records their peculiar features in his writings :

> *udvejayatyaṅgulipārṣṇibhāgān mārge śilibhūtahime'pi yatra|*
> *na durvahaśroṇipayodharārtā bhindanti mandaṃ gatimaśvamukhyaḥ||*[1]

A similar idea is reflected in the following expression :

> *śabdāyante madhuramanilaiḥ kīcakāḥ pūryamāṇāḥ*
> *saṃraktābhistripuravijayo gīyate kinnarībhiḥ|*[2]

He mentions Citraratha, the king of the gandharvas in his drama *Vikramorvaśīyam.*[3] He also mentions many apsarsās in the same. Citraratha is said to be the leader of the apsarsās. He makes apsarā Ūrvaśī the heroine of the drama and naturally speaks of others like Rambhā, Citralekhā and Sahajanyā. In *Śākuntalam* we find Menakā and Sānumatī.

---

1. *Kumāra.* 1.11.
2. *Megha. Pūrva.* 59.
3. *Vikram.*, Act I

Yāska gives the etymology of the word apsarās as :

(i) *apsarā apsāriṇi*[4], i.e. who resides in water

(ii) *apas iti rūpanāma, apsaterapsanīyam bhavatyādarśanīyam vyāpanīyam va*[5], i.e. beautiful one.

(iii) *apso nāmeti vyāpinaḥ*[6] i.e. all pervading.

## ŪRVAŚĪ

Ūrvaśī is the foremost of the celestial nymphs. In the *ṚV.*[7] a conversation between Ūrvaśī and Purūravas is found. It states that Ūrvaśī lived with the mortal king for four years and left him after the birth of his son. *ŚBr.*[8] gives further details about the reason of Urvaśī's desertion.

Kālidāsa has based his drama *Vikramorvaśīyam* on this ancient legend. The story must have appealed to our poet enough to transform it into a full-fledged drama. Later Purāṇas, apart from the Vedic authorities have this story too.[9]

Urvaśī got her name for her peculiar birth from the thigh of Nārāyaṇa. The legend is told in details in the *Devibhāgavata.*[10] Once Indra got afraid of the severity of the penance performed by Nara and Nārāyaṇa. He tried to distract them by sending a bevy of celestial nymphs. Nārāyaṇa felt disgusted and created a damsel from his thigh who surpassed all of them in beauty. This was Urvaśī. Nārāyaṇa took pity on Indra and gave Urvaśī to him. This story finds a place in Kālidāsa's composition :

*purā Nārāyaṇeneyamatisṛṣṭā marutvate/*
*daityahastādapācchidya suhṛdā samprati tvayā//*[11]

Elsewhere he states the same fact in different words :

*ūrūdbhavā narasakhasya muneḥ surastrī*[12]......etc.

---

4. *Nirukta.* 5.13.2.
5. *Ibid.* 5.13.3.
6. *Ibid.* 5.13.6.
7. *ṚV.* X.95.
8. *ŚBr.*, 11.5.1.
9. *Vp. Uttara*, 29.4-25.
   *DB. Skandha*, 1.
10. *DB. Skandha*, 4.
11. *Vik.*, I.14.
12. *Ibid.*, I.3.

Urvaśī fell in love with king Purūravas and came to live with him under certain conditions. These conditions vary from version to version. Kālidāsa follows the main outline of the story but to suit his own dramatic purpose rearranges it and supplements it with a few innovations. For example, he makes Urvaśī get cursed by the sage Bharata for a slip of tongue. This incident turns naked desire into overwhelming love. Naturally the crudeness of the myth is camouflaged with the touch of his genius.

Other versions of the story name Viśvāvasu, the gandharva leader of the apsarsās, who tries and succeeds in fooling Purūravas to take Urvaśī back to paradise. Kālidāsa never mentions him. He names Citraratha as the leader and no trick is employed here to get Urvaśī back. It all happens quite naturally. Only once he mentions Viśvāvasu in the *Kumārasambhava*, where he took part in the wedding procession of Śiva :

*Viśvāvasuprāgraharaiḥ pravīṇaiḥ saṅgīyamānatripurāvadānaḥ*/[13]

Menakā gets an indirect treatment in the *Śākuntalam*. The name Menakā is found in the *KYV*.[14] where she is said to reside at the south of the chariot of Agni. In the drama she remains in the background but is described as Śakuntalā's mother. The nymph acted as an agent of Indra to obviate success of Viśvāmitra's penance. The nymph Sānumatī, the friend of Menakā, however, gets a direct treatment in the drama.

As we have said before, Kālidāsa brings forth a number of nymphs in course of his compositions. They form a class by themselves. Beautiful, expert in singing and dancing, they live a somewhat free love-life which enables them to choose their partners at will and leave them as simply too. Menakā and Urvaśī confirm that although they do not mind being mothers they definitely do not wish to be burdened with their offsprings. They serve the wishes of Indra, the king of the gods, without question, who quite often makes use of their unimpaired youth and beauty to serve his own purpose.

---

13. *Kumāra.*, 7.48.
14. *KYV.*, 4.4.4.3.

# CHAPTER III

## ALLUSIONS TO THE SAGES

Many sages are mentioned by Kālidāsa in the span of his compositions. He also refers to their various achievements and also to some of the failures. Most of these stories are Purānic development and were current in Kālidāsa's time. The poet could not ignore the popularity of these stories and allowed them to infiltrate into his writing.

### DAKṢA

Dakṣa is termed a prajāpati in the Purāṇas. He is an ancient character dating back to the late Vedic period. His references are already discussed in the context of Śiva and Pārvatī. The story concerning his disastrous sacrifice was so famous that Kālidāsa could not ignore it.[1]

### PARAŚURĀMA

Paraśurāma is a great sage and is described as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. We did not place him under the chapter of the gods because his sage-personality is more known than his incarnation-personality.

He was born of sage Jamadagni and Reṇukā. He learnt the art of archery from none other than Śiva, who gave him a great Paraśu i.e. axe also. This gave him his name Paraśurāma.

Many myths are woven around the name of the sage. A few of them are referred to by our poet. He was an unusual sage because his career was

1. *Kumāra.*, 1.21, 1.53.

more befitting of a kṣatriya than of a brahmin. He killed his own mother by the order of his father. Circumstances which led to the cold-blooded murder of Reṇukā are beyond all logic. It goes like this[2] : once Reṇukā went to bring water but was delayed. When she returned home, her husband was already there. He asked the reason of her being late and not satisfied with the reply ordered his sons one by one to kill their mother. Four elder sons declined but Paraśurāma obliged. When Jamadagni came to his senses, Paraśurāma asked for his mother's pardon which was granted. Consequently she was brought to life by him. Our poet alludes to this legend in the following :

*yena roṣaparuṣātmanaḥ pituḥ*
*śāsane sthitibhido'pi tasthuṣā/*
*vepamānajananiśiraśchidā*
*prāgajīyata ghṛṇā tato mahi//*[3]

He is more famous for his unsatiated anger which made him destroy the kṣatriya race twentyone times. This event is interrelated with the enmity of Haiheya king Kārtavīryārjuna. Once the king along with his army went to the forest. When exhausted they went to the hermitage of Jamadagni who entertained them by the grace of Suśīlā, his wish-yielding cow. Kārtavīryārjuna, amazed at the power of the cow, asked for her. But the sage did not oblige him. Then the king took possession of the cow by force. The sage followed the cow and was eventually killed by the king's minister. Reṇukā found her husband dead on the road. She beat her chest twentyone times and wept bitterly. Paraśurāma then swore that he would exterminate the kṣatriyas from this world twentyone times. He first killed the king Kārtavīryārjuna and then performed the mass massacre twentyone times as pledged.[4] Kālidāsa refers to this legend in the following :

*kṣātriyāntakaraṇaikaviṃśater-*
*vyājapūrvagaṇanāmivodvahan/*[5]

and also gives the reason as :

*taṃ piturvadhabhavena manyunā rājavaṃśanidhanāya dīkṣitam/*[6]

---

2. *Brm.*, ch. 60.
3. *Raghu.*, 11.65.
4. *MBh. Ādi*, ch. 64, *Sabhā*, ch. 38, *Vana*, ch. 116, *Śānti*, ch. 49. *Brm.*, chs. 83-92.
5. *Raghu.*, 11.66.
6. *Ibid.*, 11.67.

He also puts the reason in Paraśurāma's mouth :

*dhenuvatsaharaṇāc ca haihayaḥ*......etc.[7]

In the *Raghuvaṃśa* Kālidāsa alludes twice to another event of his career.[8] Once the sage gave all the land to Kaśyapa and then realised that he had now not a bit left for practising austerities even. So he went to the ocean and asked for a small piece of land. When the ocean agreed, he threw a winnow and removing water took the piece of land :

*avakāśam kilodanvān rāmāyābhyarthito dadau/*
*aparāntamahīpālavyājena raghave karam//*[9]

He makes a passing reference to the myth in the same canto :

*rāmāstrotsārito 'pyāsit sahyalagna ivārṇavaḥ/*[10]

An interesting story is mentioned in the *Megha* Paraśurāma was taught archery by none other than Śiva himself. One day being jealous of the fame of Kārttikeya as the piercer of the Krauñca mountain, he too sent an arrow through it. Mallinātha refers to this legend in his commentary on the verse which states :

*Haṃsadvāram bhṛgupatiyaśovartma yat krauñcarandhram/*[11]

Another sage who receives quite an important treatment in the compositions of Kālidāsa is Agastya. The poet draws attention to many of the myths collected around this celebrated personality.

## AGASTYA

Agastya is a very famous sage. He has many amazing deeds to his credit. He was respected by gods and mortals alike for his unsurpassable power. The very birth of the sage is rather peculiar. It is stated in ancient texts that one day Mitrāvaruṇa saw the nymph Urvaśī and lost all control over themselves. They put their lost *virya* in a sacrificial pot from which Agastya was born.[12] This gave rise to the name kumbhayoni. Kālidāsa was aware of the legend as is betrayed by his use of this name.

---

7. *Ibid.*, 11.74.
8. Canto, 4.
9. *Raghu.*, 4.58.
10. *Ibid.*, 4.53.
11. *Megha. Pūrva*, 60.
12. *MBh. Śānti*, ch. 88.343.

*prasasādodayādambhaḥ kumbhayonermahaujasaḥ/*[13]

The taming of mountain Vindhya is another much publicised legend. Once mountain Vindhya soared higher to obviate sun's regular course of journey. The sun thus prevented could not give light to the entire world but had to keep on one side. Panic broke loose as a result. Then, as all reasoning failed with Vindhya, gods and sages approached Agastya, the preceptor of Vindhya and asked for his intervention to end this crisis. Agastya went to Vindhya who at once lowered his head to bow to him. Agastya bade him to remain in that position until he came back from the southern direction. Actually he never came back that way and Vindhya could not raise his head again.[14] Kālidāsa alludes to this legend more than once.

*pañcavaṭyām tato rāmaḥ śāsanāt kunbhajanmanaḥ/*
*anapoḍhasthitistasthau vindhyādriḥ prakṛtāviva//*[15]

He also uses the term '*vindhyasya saṃstambhayitā*'[16] *in the Raghuvaṃśa*.

The southern direction to which Agastya went and never returned from has been referred to by the poet as '*agastyācaritāmāśām*'.[17]

His another famous feat is the drinking of the ocean. Once the demons hid themselves into the ocean. To destroy them it was imperative to make the ocean-bed dry. Only Agastya was capable of doing this. He took all the water in his palm and drank it up leaving the ocean-bed dry. This exposed the demons who could be easily killed.[18] Kālidāsa mentions this legend more than once.

*dadau dattam samudreṇa pitenevātmaniṣkrayam/*[19]

and '*niḥśeṣapitojjhitasindhurājaḥ*' etc.[20] Subtle hints towards this myth are found in expressions like :

*prasasādodayādambhaḥ kumbhayonermahaujasaḥ/*[21]

---

13. *Raghu.*, 4.21. Cf. also 12.33 and 15.55.
14. *DB. Skandha*, 10.
15. *Raghu.*, 12.31.
16. *Ibid.*, 6.61
17. *Ibid.*, 4.41.
18. *MBh. Vana*, ch. 101-105.
19. *Raghu.*, 15.55.
20. *Ibid.*, 6.61.
21. *Ibid.*, 4.21.

The clearing up of water implies here that as if out of fear of being dried up again the ocean makes it water transparent enough to see to the bottom whenever the star Agastya rises in the sky.

His association with the king Nahuṣa will be discussed later on.

The sage who is unique in nature is Durvāsas. No other sage is as feared and despised as this one.

## DURVĀSAS

In the Epics and Purāṇas, the evil temper of this sage is quite notorious and much publicised. He is in the habit of throwing about curses in case of slightest lapse.

Different versions are found regarding the birth of Durvāsas but all the texts[22] agree that he was born from a part of Śiva. For this, his inflammable nature was rather becoming.

Kālidāsa takes advantage of this notoriety and makes this ill-tempered sage a pivotal character of his famous play *Śākuntalam.* There the impatienec and wrath of the sage suit the dramatic purposes perfectly. In the *Śākuntalam* Kālidāsa brought this evil-tempered sage to utter a curse which would give credibility to the turn of the events.[23] No other personality would have suited the role so well. He also mentions the sage's curse-throwing nature in the following verse :

*vidvānapi tayordvāḥsthaḥ samayam Lakṣmaṇo' bhinat/*
*bhito Durvāsasaḥ śāpādrāmasamdarśanārthinaḥ//*[24]

The case of the sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is most interesting. His career can be considered most complex in the Indian Mythology. He plays on important role in the development of the events in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

## ṚṢYAŚṚNGA

Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was the son of sage Vibhāṇḍaka. It is said that the sage lost all control on his senses by seeing Urvaśi and his semen dropped into water

---

22. *B.m.*, ch. 44.
*Vp.*, ch. 2.
*MBh.Anuśāsana*, ch. 160.14-15.
23. *Śāk.*, Act IV.
24 *Raghu.*, 15.94.

which was drunk up by a doe. Consequently it gave birth to a son who was Ṛṣyśṛṅga. He lived with his father and never saw a woman.

When there was a severe drought in the kingdom of king Lomapāda, he was advised to perform a sacrifice supervised by one, who had never seen a woman. Lomapāda came to know about Rṣyaśṛṅga and by employing some prostitutes lured him to his kingdom. The king not only performed the sacrifice under his supervision but also gave his daughter Śāntā to him in marriage and made him stay there permanently.[25]

King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā was advised to perform a sacrifice in order to get sons under the supervision of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. He came and performed the '*putreṣṭi*'. The sacrifice was successful.[26] Kālidāsa refers to this :

*Ṛṣyaśṛṅgādayastasya santaḥ santānakāṅkṣiṇaḥ/*
*ārebhire jitātmanaḥ putrīyāmiṣṭimṛtvijaḥ/*[27]

A group of seven great sages are named Saptarṣi. It was believed that in each *manvantara* such a group is formed.

## SAPTARṢI

The most well known group of seven sages consisted of Atri, Marīci, Vaśiṣṭha, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu.[28] Kālidāsa refers to them generally as a group but sometimes mentions them separately also. He mentions them as a body in the *Kumārasambhava* when Śiva wished them to act as the mediator between him and Himālaya :

*tasmin saṃyamināmādye jāte pariṇayonmukhe/*
*jahuḥ parigrahavrīḍāṃ prājāpatyāstapasvinaḥ//*[29]

The word '*parigrahavrīḍā*' indicates that they were married. We do not, however, commonly find the names of all the wives. Only Anasūyā, wife of Atri and Arundhatī, wife of Vaśiṣṭha became famous by their own rights.

## ATRI-ANASŪYĀ

Atri was born from Brahma's mind. Anasūyā, his wife, was the daughter of Kardama and Devahūti.[30] Atri is said to be the father of the moon.

25. *MBh., Araṇya.*, 110-112.
26. *Rām. Bāla.*, 14-16.
27. *Raghu.*, 10.4.
28. *MBh. Ādi.*, 65.10.
29. *Raghu.*, 6.34.
30. *Bh. Sk.* 1.4.

Purāṇas state[31] that Brahmā pledged that he would be born as a son to Atri and Anasūyā. He took birth as Candra and the peculiarity of the birth is that he did not come out of Anasūyā's womb but Atri's eyes. Kālidāsa clearly means this myth when he says :

> *amaramunirivātribrahmaṇo 'trerivendur*
> *budha iva śiśirāṃśorbodhanasyeva devaḥ.*/[32]

Anasūyā did not lag behind her husband in austerity. She also had some great deeds to her credit. She brought Gaṅgā to their hermitage for their convenience. One version of the story is like this : once Atri asked for some water. Anasūyā had already Gaṅgā flowing nearby. So she could give her husband nice fresh water. Later on Gaṅgā agreed to stay there in exchange of a part of Anasūyā's pious power.[33] Kālidāsa refers to this deed :

> *atrābhiṣekāya tapodhanānāṃsaptarṣihastoddhṛtahemapadmām/*
> *pravartayāmāsa kilānasūyā trisrotasāṃ tryambakamaulimālām//*[34]

When Rāma was passing by Atri's hermitage Anasūyā took Sītā under her wing and gave her some unique toiletry by dint of which she was to remain ever-fresh.[35] We find an allusion to this here :

> *Anasūyātisṛṣṭena puṇyagandhena kānanam/*
> *sā cakārāṅgarāgeṇa puṣpoccalitaṣaṭpadam//*[36]

The other famous couple is Vaśiṣṭha and Arundhatī. Vaśiṣṭha was the family-preceptor of the kings of the Ikṣvāku-race. His wife Arundhatī was very famous for her devotion to her husband. In this respect she outshone all other chaste women of the world. She owed her great power to her chastity. Kālidāsa could not possibly ignore this fact, so he says :

> *teṣām madhyagatā sādhvī patyuḥ pādārpitekṣaṇā/*
> *sākṣād iva tapaḥsiddhir babhāṣe bahvarundhatī//*[37]

The poet also acknowledges her superiority by saying that Śiva allowed her to arrange the various needful things for his marriage celebration :

---

31. *DB.* 4
    *Bṛh.* 39-43.
32. *Vik.* V.21.
33. *Sp.*
34. *Raghu.* 13.51.
35. *Rām. Āyodhyā.* 117.118.
36. *Raghu.* 12.27.
37. *Kumāra.*, 6.11.

*āryāpyarundhatī tatra vyāpāraṃ kartumarhati|*
*prāyeṇaivam vidhe kārye purandhrīṇāṃ pragalbhatā||*[38]

The other hermit of the group, named by Kālidāsa is Aṅgiras. He says :

*athāṅgirasamagragaṇyam udāharaṇavastuṣu|*[39]

Marīci is also named by the poet. He had several wives. Kaśyapa was his son and he was the original ancestor of all living beings. Our poet mentions Marīci as the father of Kaśyapa twice in the *Śākuntalam* :

*svāyambhuvān Marīcer yaḥ prababhūva prajāpatiḥ|*[40]

and also :

*dvandvaṃ DakṣaMarīcisambhavam idaṃ tat sraṣṭur ekāntaram|*[41]

This Kaśyapa had twentyone wives like Aditi, Diti, Kadrū, Vinatā etc., who were Dakṣa's daughters. In the above verse it is also implied that from Aditi the twelve Ādityas, Indra and Viṣṇu in his dwarf-form were born.

## VĀLMĪKI

Vālmīki is considered the first poet of Indian Classical Literature. As Kālidāsa fashioned his epic—*Raghuvaṃśa* on the lines of the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is only natural that he would refer to him. In narrating the career of Rāma the name of the sage crops up quite naturally. He states that Rāma asked Lakṣmaṇa to abandon Sītā at the hermitage of Vālmīki :

*Vālmīkipadaṃ tyajaināṃ* etc.[42]

Vālmīki composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* and taught Lava and Kuśa to sing it :

*sāṅgam ca vedamadhyāpya kiñcidutkrānaśaiśavau|*
*svakṛtiṃ gāpayāmāsa kaviprathamapaddhatim||*[43]

Tradition says that once while returning from river Tamasā, Vālmīki witnessed a hunter shooting down one of a krauñca couple. The intense emotion created by the incident burst out in a verse-form :

---

38. *Kumāra.* 6.32.
39. *Ibid.* 6.65.
40. *Śāk.* VII.19.
41. *Ibid.* VII.27.
42. *Raghu.* 14.45.
43. *Ibid.* 15.33.

*mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvam agamaḥ śāśvatīḥ samāḥ|*
*yat krauñcamithunād ekam avadhīḥ kāmamohitam||*[44]

After this, Brahmā appeared on the scene and advised Vālmīki to write down the story of Rāma. Kālidāsa notices the dramatic quality of the incident and records it in the *Raghuvaṃśa* :

*tāmabhyagacchad ruditānusārī*
*kaviḥ kuśedhmāharaṇāya yātaḥ|*
*niṣādaviddhāṇḍajadarśanotthaḥ*
*ślokatvamāpadyata yasya śokaḥ||*[45]

## VIŚVĀMITRA

Viśvāmitra is a famous name in the Purāṇas and the Epics. His father was king Gādhi of the lunar race. He was also known by the name Kauśika as one of his forefathers was Kuśa. Viśvāmitra was born a kṣatriya but afterwards became a brahmin. He was a sworn enemy of the sage Vasiṣṭha. He had many amazing deeds to his credit. Kālidāsa refers to his association with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa following the line of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Viśvāmitra came to Ayodhyā and sought Rāma's help to drive away the demons, who were repeatedly disturbing their life in the hermitage. Daśaratha reluctantly allowed young Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to go with him. This time, Viśvāmitra imparted to them two *mantra*-s called *Bala* and *Atibala* to ward off thirst and hunger.[46] He told them many stories and took them to many places. The principal event of this period is the killing of Tāḍaka which is described by our poet thus :

*yac cakāra vivaram śilāghane tāḍakorasi sa rāmasāyakaḥ...|*[47]

This period is remarkable for another event which is very famous in Indian Mythology, that is the release of Ahalyā from her stone-form. We have already discussed at length the circumstances leading to this calamity. Here the poet narrates the momentous happening in his unparallelled style :

---

44. *Rām.* 1.2.15.
45. *Raghu.* 14.70.
46. *Ibid.* 11.9.
47. *Ibid.* 11.18.

*pratyapadyata cirāya yat punaś-*
*cāru Gautamavadhūḥ śilāmayī/*
*svam vapuḥ sa kila kilviṣacchidām*
*Rāmapādarajasāmanugrahaḥ//*[48]

## VARATANTU—KAUTSA

Kālidāsa narrates a peculiar story about sage Varatantu and his disciple Kautsa. The episode occurred in the career of king Raghu. The preceptor asked for fourteen thousand gold coins as the parting gift. Kautsa came to king Raghu to ask for help in obtaining the enormous amount of wealth. At that moment Raghu was practically penniless after his Viśvajit sacrifice. Raghu requested him to wait and decided to raid the treasury of Kuvera. Before he could start the next day, Kuvera filled the treasury of Raghu with an astounding amount of wealth from which he could easily satisfy Kautsa's need. It seems that this story, signifying Raghu's glory, was quite popular in the days of yore. Kālidāsa narrates :

*tam bhūpatir bhāsurahemarāśim*
*labdham Kuverādabhiyāsyamānāt/*
*dideśa Kautsāya samastam eva*
*padam sumeror iva vajrabhinnam//*[49]

## ŚAMBUKA

Kālidāsa refers to a peculiar myth found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is the story of Śambuka, a śūdra, who was performing severe austerities and as a result ill omens began to appear in the city of Ayodhyā. According to Vasiṣṭha's advice, Rāma went out in search of any improper happening and found this śūdra, hanging his head down and inhaling smoke only. Rāma cut his head to save his kingdom. Kālidāsa says :

*pṛṣṭānām anvayo rājñā sa kilācaṣṭ dhūmapaḥ/*
*ātmānaṃ Śambukaṃ nāma śūdraṃ surapadārthinam/*[50]

and also :

*kṛtadaṇḍaḥ svayam rājñā lebhe śūdraḥ satāṃ gatim/*
*tapasā duścareṇāpi na svamārgavilaṅghinā//*[51]

---

48. *Raghu.* 11.34.
49. *Ibid.* 5.30.
50. *Ibid.*, 15.50.
51. *Ibid.*, 15.53

It is interesting to note that while summarising the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* in a few cantos, Kālidāsa touches only the vital points of the story. Even then he does not skip this incident which signifies that it contained some controversial value.

## SĀTAKARṆI

References of minor character included names of some sages in the compositions of Kālidāsa. One of such names is of the sage Sātakarṇi. The poet must have found the career of this sage interesting to include him in his writing. He spent ten thousand years in a pond practising several penances. Indra got anxious of the security of his position and sent five of his loyal nymphs to divert his attention. They succeeded and from then on he lived a life of sheer luxury. His residence was a palace within a lake. The lake was named pañcāpsaras. Rāma visited this place with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā.[52] Our poet mentions this when Rāma was returning from Laṅkā and showing various interesting things to Sītā :

*purā sa darbhāṅkuramātravṛttiś-*
*caran mṛgaiḥ sārddhamṛṣir maghonā/*
*samādhibhitena kilopanitaḥ*
*pañcāpsroyauvanakūṭabandham//*[53]

In his course of narration he mentions Nārada many a times. Other sages referred to by him are Cyavana, Śarabhaṅga, Sutīkṣṇa, Mataṅga, Kapila and Ahalyā. The last two personalities have been discussed elsewhere. Mythological figures like Bharata, the propagator of histrionics as a science; Manu, the founder-ruler of the world have also found place in his writings. It is remarkable how our poet, without offending the tradition at all, utilises names and legends to bring extra flavour in his compositions.

52. *Rām*. 3.11.
53. *Raghu*. 13.39.

## CHAPTER IV

# STORIES CONCERNING THE KINGS

It is only natural that Kālidāsa, the lover of mythological grandeur should refer to famous kings of ancient India. He mentions some who were so ancient that by his time they were nothing but established mythological figures with most exaggerated stories tagged with their names. As the Epic *Raghuvaṃśa* is a genealogy in a *kāvya* form, it contains mythical and historical figures alike. His dramatic compositions like *Śākuntalam*, *Vikramorvaśiyam* and *Mālavikāgnimitra* also include famous kings. In the *Meghadūta*, in course of the cloud's journey, various kings alongwith their kingdoms are mentioned quite naturally.

### KAKUTSTHA

Kakutstha was a very famous king of the Ikṣvaku dynasty. When he was ruling in Ayodhyā, a war broke out between the gods and the demons. Indra alone was no match for the demons so he approached this king for his help. He agreed on the condition that during the war, the king of the gods would act as his vehicle. Accordingly, Indra assumed the form of a big bull and sitting on its hump or *kakud* the king fought and defeated the demons. From that day, he came to be known as Kakutstha. This name was so famous that it eclipsed his true name, which sank into oblivion. His descendants are called Kākutstha.[1] Kālidāsa clearly refers to this legend when he narrates :

---

1 *DB*. 7.

*mahendram āsthāya mahokṣarūpam*
*yaḥ saṃyati prāptapinākilīlaḥ*/
*cakāra bāṇair asurāṅganānām*
*gaṇḍasthalīḥ proṣitapatralekhāḥ*//[2]

## NAHUṢA

Nahuṣa was a great name in the lunar dynasty. He was the son of Āyus and Indumatī (Aśokasundarī according to the *Padmapurāṇa*). He was so endowed with exceptional qualities that when Indra was undergoing exorcism for the sin of killing Vṛtra, gods elected him as Indra's temporary substitute. But this elevation got into his head and disbalanced him completely. He forgot all discipline and code of conduct. Taking for granted that he was entitled to everything that Indra enjoyed, he desired Śacī, wife of Indra. To teach him a lesson Śacī asked him to come by a unique palanquin borne by the celebrated sages. The king, blind with lust, agreed. As he was travelling by such a palanquin, he impatiently kicked Agastya and urged for greater speed by saying '*sarpa*'—move. Immediately Agastya cursed him to be a snake (*sarpa*) only to be released at the sight of Yudhiṣṭhira.[3] Our poet alludes to this rise and fall of the king in the following verse :

*bhrūbhedamātreṇa padān maghonaḥ*
*prabhraṃśayāṃ yo Nahuṣañcakāra*/[4]

## KĀRTAVĪRYĀRJUNA

Kārtavīryārjuna was a renowned king of the Hehaya dyasty. He wanted to attain Mokṣa and enjoy the wordly pleasures at the same time. Advised by Nārada, he performed a rite called Bhadradīpa Pratiṣṭhā on the banks of Narmadā. Dattātreya was the preceptor. Through his grace he acquired a thousand arms.[5] Kālidāsa draws our attention to the two-fold nature of the king:

*saṅgrāmanirviṣṭasahasrabāhur-*
*aṣṭādaśadvīpanikhātayūpaḥ*/
*ananyasādhāraṇarājaśabdo*
*babhūva yogī kila Kārtavīryaḥ*//[6]

---

2. *Raghu*. 6.72
3. *MBh*. 3.179.
   12.342.
   *DB*. 8.
4. *Raghu*. 13.36.
5. *Brm*. 44.
6. *Raghu*., 6.38

Rāvaṇa had to accept defeat from him. Once he came near Kārtavīrya's kingdom. He was engaged in worshipping Śiva when the king came to enjoy water sport with his wives. He playfully stopped the flow of the river with his thousand hands, as a result of which Rāvaṇa's place of worship was submerged. Enraged Rāvaṇa attacked the king but was defeated. He was imprisoned for a year. Then at the request of sage Pulastya, grandfather of Rāvaṇa, Kārtavīrya released him.[7] Kālidāsa must have thought this piece of information valuable as he records it in the following verse :

*jyābandhaniṣpandabhujena yasya*
*viniḥśvasadvaktraparamparena/*
*kārāgṛhe nirjitavāsavena*
*laṅkeśvareṇoṣitam āprasādāt//*[8]

Kārtavīryārjuna's enmity with Paraśurāma resulted in annihilation of the kṣatriya race by the infuriated sage. This legend has been discussed before. It seems that on the whole the king had an unusual reputation in mythology.

## YAYĀTI

The legend of Yayāti and Sarmiṣṭhā is quite ancient and popular as well. Yayāti was an eminent king of the lunar race. Vṛṣaparva was the king of the demons. Śarmiṣṭhā was his daughter. Devayāni, the daughter of Sukrācārya, preceptor of the demons, was the companion of the princess. Once all the girls went for a bath. After the bath, Sarmiṣṭhā wore Devayāni's dress by mistake. Devyāni felt insulted and an altercation followed. At the end, Sarmiṣṭhā pushed her into a dry well and left. Yayāti recovered her from the well and eventually married her. To pacify the preceptor, Vṛṣaparvā gave Śarmiṣṭhā to Devayāni as a maid. In course of time Yayāti fell in love with her. He married her secretly and had three sons by her. Youngest of them was Puru, who exchanged his youth with his father's old age, in order to let him enjoy the worldly pleasures.[9]

The story has a delicate sentiment of pathos and an air of poignant melancholy. It must have touched the deep chords of the poet's heart because he could not resist the reference even if it was indirect :

---

7. *Rām. Uttara.*
8. *Raghu.* 6.40.
9. *MBh.* 1.76-85.

*Yayāter iva Śarmiṣṭhā bhartur bahumatā bhava|*
*sutam tvam api samrājaṃ seva Pūrum avāpnuhi||*[10]

## UDAYANA-PRADYOTA

Another legendary figure who was very favourite with the mythologists and poets alike was Udayana. Many ancient lores are woven around him. His father was Sahasrānīka. He ruled the kingdom of Vatsa and his capital was Kauśāmbī. The story of Udayana was told in the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇādhya which seems to be lost for ever. Somadeva composed the *Kathāsaritsāgara* on the basis of this book and tried to keep the stories in tact as much as possible. The story of Udayana is found in the *taraṅga*-s 11-16 of this book.

Pradyota, the king of Ujjayinī had a beautiful daughter, called Vāsavadattā. As Udayana was an expert in playing Vīṇā, Pradyota wanted him as Vāsavadattā's teacher. For this, he wanted to bring Udayana to his kingdom by hook or by crook. Udayana had great weakness for elephants. One of his hobbies was to enchant them with his playing of Vīṇā and then capture them. Pradyota had an excellent elephant, called Nalagiri or Nādagiri. He used this elephant as a bait to lure the king. He made an exact wooden replica of the elephant and kept it in the forest near Kauśambī. When Udayana heard that the famous elephant was seen in the forest he could not resist the temptation to catch him. As he approached it along, soldiers hidden in the belly of the elephant came out and held him captive. Udayana, as a prisoner of king Pradyota, was engaged to teach the princess. In course of time, the king and the princess fell in love with each other. At last they eloped from Ujjayinī on an elephant, called Bhadrāvatī. Udayana married Vāsavadattā and doted on her. This tale of unusual love was very popular in ancient times. Kālidāsa draws our attention to the popularity by saying :

*prāpyāvantinudayanakathākovidagrāmavṛddhān|*[11]

He does not ignore the main legend and the vital points come up in the following verse :

*Pradyotasya priyaduhitaraṃ vatsarājo'tra jahre*
*haimam tāladrumavanamabhūd atra tasyaiva rājñaḥ|*

---

10. *Śāk.* IV.7.
11. *Megha. Pūrva.*30.

*atrodbhrāntaḥ kila Nalagiriḥ stambham utpāṭya darpād*
*ityāgantūn ramayati jano yatra bandhūnabhijñaḥ//*[12]

Bhāsa, the celebrated poet, composed his famous drama *Svapnavāsavadattā* on the basis of this legend.

## RANTIDEVA

Rantideva's magnanimity put him in an honourable position in the days of yore. He was considered the kindest of the kings of ancient India. His unique hospitality won him a place of distinction in mythology. It is said that he engaged twenty thousand people to cook food for guests who came to the palace every day. He was very particular about entertaining the guests. The blood that flowed from killing beasts for the preparation of meals of the guests formed a river called Carmaṇvatī.[13] The facts were so amazing that the poet could not refrain from mentioning it :

*srotomūrtyā bhuvi pariṇatāṃ Rantidevasya kīrtim/*[14]

Among other illustrious kings of ancient times, Kālidāsa names Nala but does not mention any event of his career. He makes Duṣyanta, another king, the hero of his drama *Śākuntalam*. There he fully utilises the legend about him found in the *MBh*. To suit his own delicate taste he makes a complete overhauling of the story and finishes up with a most beautiful and poignant tale. In his other drama *Vikramorvaśīyam*, the career of another king, Purūravas is treated. We have dealt with this myth in a previous chapter. The story of *Mālavikāgnimitra*, his third drama has a comparatively later king as the hero. He was a historical figure belonging to the Śuṅga dynasty, and the son of Puṣyamitra.

Thus we see that most of the curious events or unforgettable characters found place in the writings of Kālidāsa. Such references add an interesting and colourful tone to his style.

---

12. *Ibid*. 31.
13. *MBh*. 12.29.
 7.67.
14. *Megha. Pūrva*.48.

CHAPTER V

# MYTHOLOGICAL TALES ABOUT DEMONS

Kālidāsa's writings contain several references to demons also. Naturally these characters date back to a hazy past when immortals mixed freely with mortals. Most of the names of the demons are found in the Vedic texts and modern scholars have spared no pains to come up with more acceptable explanations about the outrageous conception of demons. At the same time subsequent texts not only accept them as they are but also add to the clan. As a result the society of demons becomes a veritable challenge to that of the gods. So much so that they are often the victorious party while the king of the gods rushes to mortals for help. Most powerful demons are found in later mythologies. Some of them possess admirable qualities also. Gods of later mythologies sometimes look decidedly insipid in contrast with the vigorous demons.

## RĀVAṆA

Rāvaṇa can be considered the most powerful one among the demons. His father was Vaisravas and mother Naikasi. He was the grandson of Pulastya, the mind-born son of Brahmā and hence was known as Paulastya. He performed severe penances for a long time and secured several boons. Some of his feats are mentioned by Kālidāsa.

Kuvera was Rāvaṇa's brother. Once Rāvaṇa got enraged with Kuvera. He not only defeated him in a fight, but also drove him away after taking

all his wealth and the coveted Puṣpaka chariot.[1] This event is alluded to by the poet :

*taccātmacintāsulabhaṃ vimānam*
*hṛtam surāreḥ saha jīvitena/*
*kailāsanāthodvahanāya bhūyaḥ*
*puṣpam divaḥ puṣpakam anvamaṃsta//*[2]

Rāvaṇa defeated all the gods as he turned invincible by the boon of Brahmā. He, at the time of the penance, cut off his nine heads to please him. As he was about to cut of his tenth head Brahmā appeared and granted him his desired boon. This incident is mentioned by our poet at least twice, once in the tenth canto of the *Raghuvaṃśa* and once in the twelfth.

*svāsidhārāparihṛtaḥ kāmam cakarasya tena me/*
*sthāpito daśamo mūrdhā labhyāṃśo iva rakṣasā//*[3]

and :

*jetāraṃ lokapālānāṃ svamukhair arciteśvaram/*[4]

It is significant that when Brahmā asked him to name his boon he asked that he should be unbeatable by the gods. He never imagined that a man could ever defeat him. Kālidāsa's writings reflect this logic :

*dhātāram tapasā prītam yayāce sa hi rākṣasaḥ/*
*daivāt svargād avadhyatvaṃ martyeṣv āsthāparāṅmukhaḥ//*[5]

He, just as the boons, collected curses in abundance also. His lust and sometimes arrogance led to this.

His lustful nature received a jolt when he was cursed by Nalakūbara[6] for molesting her beloved Rambhā. The legend goes like this : once Rambhā, the celestial nymph was going on a rendezvous with Nalakūbara, son of Kuvera. Rāvaṇa intercepted her, and satisfied his lust against her will, ignoring all her appeals. When Nalakūbara came to know of this, he cursed Rāvaṇa that if ever again he touched another unwilling woman, his heads would split. For this curse Rāvaṇa could not molest Sītā. Kālidāsa considers this incident important enough to refer to :

1. *Rām. Uttars.*
2. *Raghu.* 14.20.
3. *Ibid.* 10.41.
4. *Ibid.* 12.89.
5. *Raghu.* 10.43.
6. *MBh.* 3.28.

*mokṣyadhve svargavandīnām veṇibandhadūṣitān/*
*śāpayantritapaulastyabalātkārakacagrahaiḥ//*[7]

It seems that the myth that Rāvaṇa lifted up the Kailāsa mountain is one of the favourite stories of our poet because he refers to it more than once. To draw the attention of Śiva he did this. The poet imagines that this gave bad fright to the inhabitants of Kailāsa.

*gatvā cordhvaṃ daśamukhabhujocchvāsitaprasthasandheḥ*
*kailāsasya tridaśavanitādarpaṇasyātithiḥ syāḥ/*[8]

It did one good turn, however. When the mountain rocked, Pārvatī got nervous and embraced Śiva. This proved to be an unprecedented pleasure to the Lord. The poet says :

*Rāvaṇadhvanitabhītayā tayā*
*kaṇṭhasaktadṛḍhabāhuvandhanaḥ/*
*ekapiṅgalagirau jagadgurur*
*nirviveśa viśadāḥ śāśiprabhāḥ//*[9]

In describing the career of Rāma in the *Raghuvaṃśa* our poet naturally dwells upon the career of Rāvaṇa.

## HIRAṆYĀKṢA

The reference to the demon Hiraṇyākṣa may be called indirect. Kālidāsa uses the name Hiraṇyākṣaripur to mean Viṣṇu with a covert hint that there was enmity between Viṣṇu and the demon. The legend, however, is very famous.

Jaya and Vijaya, the gate-keepers of Viṣṇu were once cursed by the sage Sanaka. Afterwards the sage, partially pacified, gave the option of taking three births as Viṣṇu's enemy or taking seven births as his friend. The brothers opted for the former and took three births as demons which were to be terminated by none other than Viṣṇu. In the first birth they were Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu, and were killed by the boar and the man-lion incarnations of Viṣṇu respectively. In the second birth, they were Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa and were killed by the Rāma incarnation, in the

---

7. *Raghu.* 10.47.
8. *Megha. Pūrva.* 58.
9. *Kumāra.* 8.24.

third they were Śiśupāla and Dantavakra and were killed by the Kṛṣṇa incarnation.[10] Kālidāsa says :

*aṃśe Hiraṇyākṣaripoḥ sa jāte hiraṇyanābhe tanaye nayajñaḥ/*[11]

Hiraṇyākṣa was born of Kaśyapa and Diti. He grew up to be a menace to the whole world. At this time the world was submerged in water and Viṣṇu assumed the form of an enormous boar to pick up the world Hiraṇyākṣa challenged the boar, fought it and was killed by it.

Dr. Paul Hacker, in his scholarly paper on the importance and evolution of the legend remarks : "Fur den, der die Geschichte der indischen Seele erkennen will, send sie ebenso wichtig und interessant wie die klassischen, gedankenreichen Bearbeitungen und wie der dissen vorausgehende ProzeB der Entstehung der Legende. Insbesondene fur die Geschichte der Hindu-Frommigheit und der Auseinandersetzungen, die es zurischen den Hauptreligionen des Hinduismus gegeben hat, beiten sie wertvolles Material. AuBerdem egreben sich die ihrem Studium literaturgeschichtliche Erkenntnisse.[12]

This legend has been used in various manners by various schools. The Prahlāda aspect of the legend in its final stage has been skillfully added and utilised by the devotees of Viṣṇu.

## KĀLANEMI

Kālidāsa means Kaṃsa by the term Kālanemi. He says :

*Kālanemivadhāt prītasturāṣāḍ iva śārṅgiṇam/*[13]

This Kaṃsa is the son of Ugrasena. The background of the episode is this : six sons of Marīci got cursed and were born as the sons of the demon Kālanemi. Next they were born as sons of Hiraṇyakaśipu and led a pious life. Hiraṇyakaśipu did not like this and cursed them again. They were to be born to Devakī and killed by Kaṃsa.[14] The *Bhāgavtapurāṇa*[15] also calls Kaṃsa Kālanemi at times.

10. *Bh. Skandha.* 1.
11. *Raghu.* 18.25.
12. Hacker : *Prahlāda Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*, Teil II.
13. *Raghu.* 15.40.
14. *DB. Skandha.* 4.
15. *Bh, Skandha.* 10.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*[16], however, we find another demon by the same name, who was an associate of Rāvaṇa. This demon obstructed the path of Hanumān when he was out in search of herbs to break Lakṣamaṇa's swoon. Ultimately he was killed by Hanumān.

## KEŚIN

Indian Mythology has more than one Keśin in its store. In *RV*. we find a god by that name, who resides in the abode of the Apsaras, Gandharvas and deer :

> *apsarasām gandharvāṇām mṛgāṇām caraṇe caran/*[17]

The first verse of the same hymn reveals his identity as :

> *keśyagnim keśi viṣam keśi vibharti rodasi/*
> *keśi viśām svādṛśe kesidam jyotirucyate//*[18]

Yāska in his *Nirukta*[19] explains the etymology as : *keśi keśa rasmayastaistadvān bhavati, kasanād vā prakāsanādvā. Keśa* here means rays and keśin is identified with the Sun.

The *Mahābhāratā* says that forty demons were born of Kaśyapa and Danu. Keśin was one of them.[20] He had a fight with Indra over the abduction of Prajāpati's daughters named Daityasenā and Devasenā. Most probably Kālidāsa alludes to this Keśin.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* refers to another Keśin who was a follower of Kaṃsa and was killed by Kṛṣṇa in his childhood.

In the first act of the *Vikramurvaśiyam* Kālidāsa brings in the demon Keśin :

Urvaśī...*hiraṇyapuravāsinā keśinā dānavena vandigrahaṃ gṛhītā*, etc.

---

16. *Rām. Yuddhakāṇḍa.*
17. *ṚV.* 10.136.6.
18. *Ibid.*, 10.36.
19. *Nirukta*. C. U. P. 1312.
20. *MBh.* 1.65.3.223.

## CHAPTER VI

# MISCELLANEOUS REFERENCES

Some animals are famous in Indian Mythology. Kālidāsa refers to Hanumān who has a special place in Hindu legendary lore.

### HANUMĀN

Hanumān is said to be the son of Vāyu and Añjanā. He is one of the key figures in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Kālidāsa alludes to the first meeting of Hanumān and Sītā at Laṅkā :

*ityākhyāte pavanatanayaṃ maithilīvonmukhī sā*/[1]

Hanumān crossed the ocean to search for Sītā in the kingdom of the demons. He found her confined in the Aśokavana with demonesses keeping vigil over her. He hid himself on a tree and waited for an opportunity to talk to her. At last when he started talking about Rāma, Sītā, utterly astonished, turned her face up to see who was the person. His devotion to Rāma is very much appreciated in subsequent ages.

### KĀLIYA-NĀGA

Kāliya, the serpent, was born of Kaśyapa and Kadru.[2] He possessed one thousand heads.[3] Garuḍa was the confirmed enemy of the snakes. To avoid him, Kāliya came to live in Kālindī river which was a prohibited area

---

1. *Megha. Uttara.* 40.
2. *MBh.* 1.35.
3. *Bh. Skandha.* 10.

for Garuḍa. Another story accounts for this prohibition.[4] As Garuḍa, out of hatred, began the massive onslaughter on the snakes; they proposed, urged by sheer sense of self-preservation, that they would send a snake each day for Garuḍa's meal. Only Kāliya did not agree to the programme. So Garuḍa had a grim fight with him. It took place on the banks of Kālindī. During the fight, the river was swollen and drenched the sage Saubhari who was practising penance there. The angry sage cursed Garuḍa that if ever he entered the region again, he would die. So Garuḍa dared not go near Kālindī after that. Kāliya is said to have given king Suṣena a valuable gem :

*trastena tārkṣyāt kila Kāliyena*
*maṇim visṛṣṭaṃ yamunaukasā yaḥ|*
*vakṣasthalavyāpirucaṃ dadhānaḥ|*
*sakaustubhaṃ hrepayativa Kṛṣṇam||*[5]

Anantanāga has also been mentioned by the poet. The allusions have already been discussed.

Several mountains like Kailāsa, Maināka are referred to by the poet. In this context we must mention mountaiu Mandara also. This mountain is mentioned in course of describing the churning cf the milk ocean. This particular myth seems to be a favourite with our poet who keeps on referring to that special occasion. One of such references contains a mention of Mandara :

*padmanābhavalayāṅkitāśmasu*
*prāptavatsvamṛtavipruṣo navāḥ|*
*Mandarasya kaṭakeṣu cāvasat*
*Pārvatīvadanapadmaṣaṭpadaḥ||*[6]

Churning is also mentioned in the following :

*vṛṣeva payasāṃ sāram āviṣkṛtam udanvatā|*[7]

and in :

*ābhāti bhūyiṣṭham ayaṃ samudraḥ*
*pramathyamāno giriṇeva bhūyaḥ|*[8]

---

4. *Ibid.*
5. *Raghu.* 6.49.
6. *Kumāra.* 8.23.
7. *Raghu.* 10.52.
8. *Ibid.* 13.14.

The above discussion reveals the extent of Kālidāsa's knowledge in the sphere of current mythology. He was acquainted with many of the extant Purāṇas and utilised every scope to allude to popular tales and characters. His famous imageries acquired novelty, colour, depth and great value from being associated with such myths. His extensive use of Purāṇic legends enables us to arrive at some important conclusions and also opens up new avenues of studies. A comparative study of various versions of a myth points towards the antiquity of a particular Purāṇa. Although Purāṇas are more of a compilation than of a work of a single author, yet the stage of a certain legend contained in a Purāṇa may throw light on the age of the Puraāṇa also. Kālidāsa's acquaintance with certain version of a myth thus indicates his contemporary and earlier Purāṇas. His ignorance of a particular aspect of a myth, by the same logic, may point out later Purāṇas. It is a pity that we are yet to ascertain the age of the greatest poet of classical Sanskrit but this might prove yet another angle to study his age.

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ap | — Agnipurāṇa | N | — Nirukta |
| AV | — Atharvaveda | Pp | — Padmapurāṇa |
| Bd | — Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa | Raghu | — Raghuvaṃśa |
| Bh | — Bhāgavatapurāṇa | ṚV | — Ṛgveda |
| Bṛhat | — Bṛhatsaṃhitā | Śāk | — Abhijñānaśākuntala |
| Brm | — Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa | ŚBr | — Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa |
| Bv | — Brahmavaivartapurāṇa | Sk | — Skandapurāṇa |
| DB | — Devī-Bhāgavatapurāṇa | Sp | — Saurapurāṇa |
| Kumāra | — Kumārasambhava | Śp | — Śivapurāṇa |
| Ka | — Kālikāpurāṇa | ŚYV | — Śukla Yajurveda |
| KYV | — Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda | Vā | — Vāyupurāṇa |
| Mal | — Mālavikāgnimitra | Var | — Vārāhapurāṇa |
| Mar | — Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa | Vp | — Vāmanapurāṇa |
| Mat | — Matsyapurāṇa | Vi | — Viṣṇupurāṇa |
| MBh | — Mahābhārata | Vik | — Vikramorvaśīya |
| Megha | — Meghadūta | | |

## BIBLIOGRAPHY


1. Banerji, S. C. *Kālidāsakośa*. The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1968.
2. Basu, Girindra Shekhar. *Purāṇapraveśa*. Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Calcutta, 1361 BS.
3. Bhattacarya, H. N. *Hinduder Devdevi*. vols. I II III. Firma KLM (Pvt) Ltd, Calcutta, 1977.
4. Chattopadhyay, Mita. *Prāchin Bharater Devabhāvanā*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1980.
5. Elliot, Charles. *Hinduism and Buddhism*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1962.
6. Hacker, Dr. Paul. *Prahlāda Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealyestalt*, Teil I, II.
7. Hopkins, E. W. *Epic Mythology*. Indological Book House, Varanasi, 1968.
8. —Do— *The Great Epic of India*. Punthi Pustak. Calcutta,
9. —Do— *Origin and Evolution of Religion*. Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan. Varanasi.
10. Kālidāsa. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, A. B. Gajendragadkar, Third edition, Surat, 1946.
11. Kālidāsa. *Kumārasambhava*. Nārāyāyaṇarāma Acārya, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Fourteenth edition, Bombay, 1955.
12. —Do— *Mālavikāgnimitra*. R. Vidyābhūṣaṇa, Vasumati Sahitya Mandir, Calcutta, 1370 B. S.
13. —Do— *Meghadūta*. ed. M. R. Kale. Booksellers' Publishing Co., Bombay.

14. —Do— *Raghuvaṃśa*, Vasudeva Lakṣmaṇa Sastri Paṇaśikara. Nirnaya Sagar Press, Seventh edition, Bombay, 1929.

15. —Do— *Vikramorvaśiya*. ed. M. R. Kale. Motilal Banarsidass. Varanasi.

16. Macdonell, A. A. *Vedic Mythology*. Indological Book House. Varanasi, 1963.

17. Ray, Jogesh. Ch. *Veder Devata O Krstikal*. Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, Calcutta, 1361 BS.

18. Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, T. R. Vyāsācārya, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1905.

19. *Veda, Ṛksaṃhitā* Asoke Chatterjee Sastri, Calcutta, 1969

20. *Veda Yajuḥ. Śukla* ,, Vaidik Samsodhana
*Yajuḥ Kṛṣṇā* ,, Mahamandala, Poona, 1990.

21. *Veda, Atharva*. W. H. Whitney, Berlin, 1924.

22. Vedavyāsa. *Māhābhārata*. V. S. Sukthanker and others, Bhandarkar Oriental Reserch Institute, Poona, 1931 etc.

Vedavyāsa Purāṇas.

23. *Agni*. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri. Calcutta, 1990.

24. *Bhāgavata*. ed. Ramaranjan Kāvyavyākaraṇatirtha. Calcutta, 1372 BS.

25. Brahmāṇḍa. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri, Calcutta, 1989.

26. *Brahmavaivarta*. P. Tarkaratna, Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, 1332 BS.

27. *Bṛhaddharma*. P. Tarkaratna, Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, 1314 BS.

28. *Devibhāgavata*. P. Tarkaratna. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, 1332 BS.

29. *Kālikā*. P. Tarkaratna, Navabharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1384 BS.

30. *Mārkaṇḍeya*. P. Tarkaratna, Vaṅgavāsī Press, Fourth edition, Calcutta, 1316 BS.

31. *Matsya*. Harinarayan Apte, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series. Poona, 1907.

32. *Padma*. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri. All India Kashiraj Trust. Varanasi, 1972.

33. *Saura*. P. Tarkaratna, Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, 1316 BS.

34. *Śiva*. P. Tarkaratna and Srijiva Nyayatirtha. Navabharat Publishers. Calcutta, 1392 BS

35. *Skanda*. ed. Nag Sharan Singh, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1981.

36. *Vāmana*. ed. Ananda Swarup Gupta, All India Kashiraj Trust, Varanasi, 1967.

37. *Varāha*. Sri Venkateswar Steam Press, Bombay, 1923.

38. *Vāyu*. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri. Calcutta, 1982.

39. *Viṣṇu*. Asoke Chatterjee Sastri, Calcutta, 1984.

40. Wilkins, W. J. *Hindu Mythology*. Delhi Book Store, Delhi, 1972.

41. Yāska. *Nirukta*. ed. Amareswar Thakur. Calcutta University, 1963.